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## The Application of China's Three Warfares Strategy in Taiwan and the Arctic

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**JCSP 48**

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## ABSTRACT

In 2008, the US Office of the Secretary of Defense released its annual report to Congress outlining China's military capabilities and for the first time, the report included a description of a novel Chinese military strategy labeled by Beijing as the "three warfares", consisting of a comprehensive application of non-kinetic effects across the media, psychological, and legal domains. Nested under the framework of political warfare, the purpose of the three warfares is to provide the People's Liberation Army (PLA) the means to shape an environment in favour of Beijing's interests, without resorting to armed conflict. Since their inception in 2003, the three warfares have been much discussed by Western defence analysts but there is currently no consensus on their impact or effectiveness. As such, this paper seeks to analyze and assess the effectiveness of the three warfares as a PLA strategy, specifically looking at their application against Taiwan and the Arctic. The project argues that the three warfares have not been effective in furthering China's strategic objectives in those regions. Contrary to its stated characteristics of employing subtlety and sophistication in weakening an adversary's resolve, the three warfares' blunt application by Beijing has in fact strengthened anti-Chinese sentiments. In attempting to purchase influence and manipulate public opinion, China may have been mirroring its own expectations and understandings of its authoritarianism unto its adversaries, and thereby demonstrating a lack of flexibility and adaptability to the environment in which it operates.

## **FEET OF CLAY? THE APPLICATION OF CHINA'S THREE WARFARES STRATEGY IN TAIWAN AND THE ARCTIC**

### **CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION**

*In War, it is best to attack minds, not cities; political warfare is better than fighting with weapons.*

– Luo Guanzhong, 14<sup>th</sup> century Chinese writer.

When it comes to appreciating Chinese strategic reach, the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) conventional warfighting capabilities occupy a prominent place among Western defence analysts.<sup>1</sup> In 2018, a team led by US Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks examined how Washington would fare in a direct confrontation with Beijing on the battlefield; interestingly, the team concluded that due to China's extensive military buildup witnessed over the last three decades, America might struggle, if not outright lose in a direct conventional confrontation with China.<sup>2</sup> The US Defense Department's latest report on the status of the Chinese military almost exclusively focusses on the introduction of new weaponry, the modernization of nuclear forces, and the growing size and capabilities of both Chinese ground and naval forces.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in 2015 the RAND Corporation published a "US-China military scorecard", an in-depth analysis

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<sup>1</sup> Caitlin Campbell, "China's Military: The People's Liberation Army (PLA)," *Congressional Research Service Report*, (2014):1, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R46808.pdf>; Anthony H. Cordesman and Grace Hwang, "Updated Report: Chinese Strategy And Military Forces In 2021," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, (03 August 2021), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/updated-report-chinese-strategy-and-military-forces-2021>.

<sup>2</sup> Graham Allison, "China's PLA is a Peasant Army No More," *Defense One*, (20 December 2021), <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2021/12/chinas-pla-peasant-army-no-more/360021/>.

<sup>3</sup> US Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving The People's Republic of China* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 2021), VI, <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Nov/03/2002885874/-1/-1/0/2021-CMPR-FINAL.PDF>

and comparison of US and Chinese military capabilities and the evolving balance of power in Asia. Despite the report's stated purpose of filling gaps in Chinese military capabilities and strategies, very little focused on the PLA's capabilities outside of the realm of aggregate military hardware.<sup>4</sup> It is important to clarify that the PLA, at its core, is not solely an instrument to wage armed conflict; in the words of Mao Zedong, people do not understand that the "Chinese Red Army [PLA] is an armed body for carrying out the political tasks of the revolution. The Red Army fights not merely for the sake of fighting but in order to conduct propaganda among the masses [...]."<sup>5</sup> Hence, what is fundamentally lacking in these defence analyses is a clear appreciation of ways in which the PLA leverages other tools at its disposal, specifically non-kinetic means, to achieve its strategic objectives.

The concept of what can be defined as success in achieving one's strategic objectives has evolved significantly over time. British historian A.J.P. Taylor wrote that in 19th century Europe, what confined "great power status" was the ability to successfully prosecute a war.<sup>6</sup> Yet as John Arquilla notes, in the information age victory may sometimes depend not so much on whose military is successful on the battlefield, but rather on whose narrative ultimately prevails.<sup>7</sup> As witnessed in Vietnam, Iraq, and more recently in the American withdrawal from Afghanistan after two decades of conflict, a prolonged application of military power has too often resulted in disastrous outcomes. As such, the PLA has started to incorporate an understanding of war that is not solely based on the kinetic application of force, but towards what Chinese expert Laura

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<sup>4</sup> Eric Heginbotham et al., "The US-China Military Scorecard 1996-2017," *RAND Corporation*, (2015): xxxi, [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR300/RR392/RAND\\_RR392.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR300/RR392/RAND_RR392.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Mao Zedong, "On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party," *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, (December 1929), [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1\\_5.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_5.htm)

<sup>6</sup> Alan J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle For Mastery In Europe: 1848-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 55.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph S. Nye, "The Information Revolution and Soft Power," *Current History* Vol. 113, Issue. 759 (January 2014): 20, <https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/11738398/Nye-InformationRevolution.pdf>.

Jackson calls an understanding “focused more on thought processes, mental impressions, and the will to act.”<sup>8</sup> In fact, the notion that it is more strategically viable to defeat an adversary in the cognitive realm rather than by engaging it militarily on the battlefield has been accepted among China’s military theorists.<sup>9</sup>

In 2008, the US Office of the Secretary of Defense released its annual report to Congress outlining China’s military capabilities; for the first time, the report included a description of a novel Chinese military strategy labeled by Beijing as the “three warfares”, consisting of a comprehensive application of non-kinetic effects across the media, psychological, and legal domains.<sup>10</sup> This application is primarily geared towards providing the PLA the means to shape an environment in favour of Beijing without resorting to armed conflict.<sup>11</sup> In essence, this concept represents China’s strategy to expand the notion of a conflict against a potential adversary outside the traditional boundaries of battlefield success, relying rather on such concepts as public opinion manipulation, enemy leadership disorientation, and legal falsification to achieve its objectives. Although the three warfares have officially been part of the Chinese

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<sup>8</sup> Laura Jackson, "Revisions of Reality: The Three Warfares – China’s New Way of War," in *Information at War: From China’s Three Warfares to NATO’s Narratives*, (2015): 5, <https://lif.blob.core.windows.net/lif/docs/default-source/publications/information-at-war-from-china-s-three-warfares-to-nato-s-narratives-pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=2>.

<sup>9</sup> See for example, Dean Cheng, "Winning Without Fighting: The Chinese Psychological Warfare Challenge," *The Heritage Foundation*, no.2821 (July 2013): 3. [https://cdn.mashreghnews.ir/old/files/fa/news/1392/12/16/512248\\_358.pdf](https://cdn.mashreghnews.ir/old/files/fa/news/1392/12/16/512248_358.pdf); Kerry Gershaneck, "To Win Without Fighting: Defining China's Political Warfare", *Marine Corps University*, (17 June 2020), <https://www.usmcu.edu/Outreach/Marine-Corps-University-Press/Expeditions-with-MCUP-digital-journal/To-Win-without-Fighting/>; Stefan Halper, *China: The Three Warfares*, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2013), 11, <https://cryptome.org/2014/06/prc-three-wars.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> US Department of Defense, *Military Power Of The People’s Republic of China* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 2008), I, <https://nuke.fas.org/guide/china/dod-2008.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), XI. There is no agreed upon definition of strategy. One common definition is concerned with “ways to employ means to achieve ends”. Although it is not without its detractors, it is well established in military circles; Michael Clarke, "China’s Application Of The Three Warfares in The South China Sea and Xinjiang," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, (Spring 2019): 189. [https://nsc.crawford.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/publication/nsc\\_crawford\\_anu\\_edu\\_au/2019-05/chinas\\_app\\_of\\_the\\_3\\_warfares\\_in\\_xj\\_and\\_scs.pdf](https://nsc.crawford.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/publication/nsc_crawford_anu_edu_au/2019-05/chinas_app_of_the_3_warfares_in_xj_and_scs.pdf).



military lexicon since 2003, the strategy is underappreciated in the literature of current Chinese strategic thinking in the West

The strategy and application of the three warfares, as analyzed in this research project, has been much discussed by Western defence analysts, but there is currently no consensus on impact or effectiveness.<sup>12</sup> The purpose of this project is therefore to analyze and assess the effectiveness of the three warfares as a PLA strategy, specifically looking at their application against Taiwan and the Arctic. The project will begin in Chapter 2 by outlining the role that political warfare has played in Chinese strategic thinking, and how the three warfares constitute the most prominent subset of Chinese political warfare. The chapter will attempt to offer a comprehensive overview of the origins and definitions of the strategy, including how despite having officially only been around the last 20 years, its roots can be found in ancient Chinese strategic thinking dating back to antiquity. The chapter will also discuss how China has used US information operations conducted in Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Iraq as justification and inspiration for its three warfares strategy. After outlining the theoretical framework, the paper will subsequently approach the three warfares from a practical perspective in Chapters 3 and 4 by describing their applications in two of the most contested geostrategic locations in the world: Taiwan and the Arctic, respectively. It is this specific application of the three warfares in those two regions that represents the novel contribution that this paper hopes to bring to the available literature. In addition to demonstrating ways in which China applies the three warfares against Taiwan, Chapter 3 will discuss how, despite almost 20 years of sustained application of the three warfares strategy, Beijing has not come closer to achieving its strategic objective of deteriorating

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<sup>12</sup> John Garnaut, "US Unsettled by China's Three Warfares Strategy: Pentagon Report," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, April 11 2014, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/us-unsettled-by-chinas-three-warfares-strategy-pentagon-report-20140410-36g45.html>.

the resolve of the Taiwanese people to resist reunification. Chapter 4 will seek to highlight the inconsistencies between Beijing's international and domestic rhetoric with regards to its interests in the Arctic, as well as demonstrate that the application of the three warfares is actually counter-productive for Beijing's goals of securing legitimacy and sustained access to the region. Finally, Chapter 5 will conclude by highlighting the lack of flexibility and adaptability demonstrated by China to the environment in which it operates, and offer some areas that would benefit from further research and analysis.

Psychologist Steven Pinker once claimed that acknowledging our limitations may ultimately be more sincere than denying them. Just as in any other research trying to analyze a Chinese concept from a Western perspective, there are limitations to this project with the most significant one being a linguistic limitation with regards to access to primary resources. Other than a few significant primary documents that I was able to obtain in a translated format, most of the resources upon which this project is built on are the analyses and observations of Chinese experts who are able to access and read the documents in their original language of Mandarin. As such, there is a real concern for groupthink to occur considering that I noticed that most of these experts tend to quote and refer to each other when offering specific claims. The intent of such statement is in no way to denigrate the work of these authors, who I am truly indebted to, but to hopefully highlight to the reader the limitations of researching a project that has not been widely written about.

Regardless of these limitations, this Directed Research Project offers a military professional's perspective on the examination and application of the three warfares strategy, and the dangers of disregarding them. Indeed, it is my hope that this project will in itself help provide

a small contribution to the literature on a subject that is bound to become even more relevant in the context of China's continued rise as a potential peer-competitor to the West.

## CHAPTER 2 – ORIGINS AND DESCRIPTION

### Political Warfare in Chinese Strategic Thinking

Political warfare as a concept can be defined in many ways; The Project 2049 Institute, an American think-tank focused primarily on US foreign policy vis-à-vis China and Taiwan, defines political warfare as a strategy that “seeks to influence emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals in a manner favorable to one’s own political-military objectives.”<sup>13</sup> The RAND corporation adopts a “whole-of-government” approach and defines the concept as “intentional use of one or more of the implements of power — diplomatic/political, information/cyber, military/intelligence, and economic — to affect the political composition or decision-making in a state.”<sup>14</sup> Figure 1 illustrates this particular approach by presenting political warfare as overlapping all four levers of government power, to include psychological warfare, propaganda, and economic subversion. Furthermore, the use of political warfare as a tool of government is not limited to authoritarian regimes such as China. The British, for their part, viewed political warfare during the Second World War primarily as propaganda to be disseminated beyond enemy lines, while the Americans took a more wholesome approach as characterized by the views of George F. Kennan.<sup>15</sup> Kennan, an American diplomat famous for his “containment” strategy against the Soviet Union, defined political warfare as “the employment of all the means at a nation’s

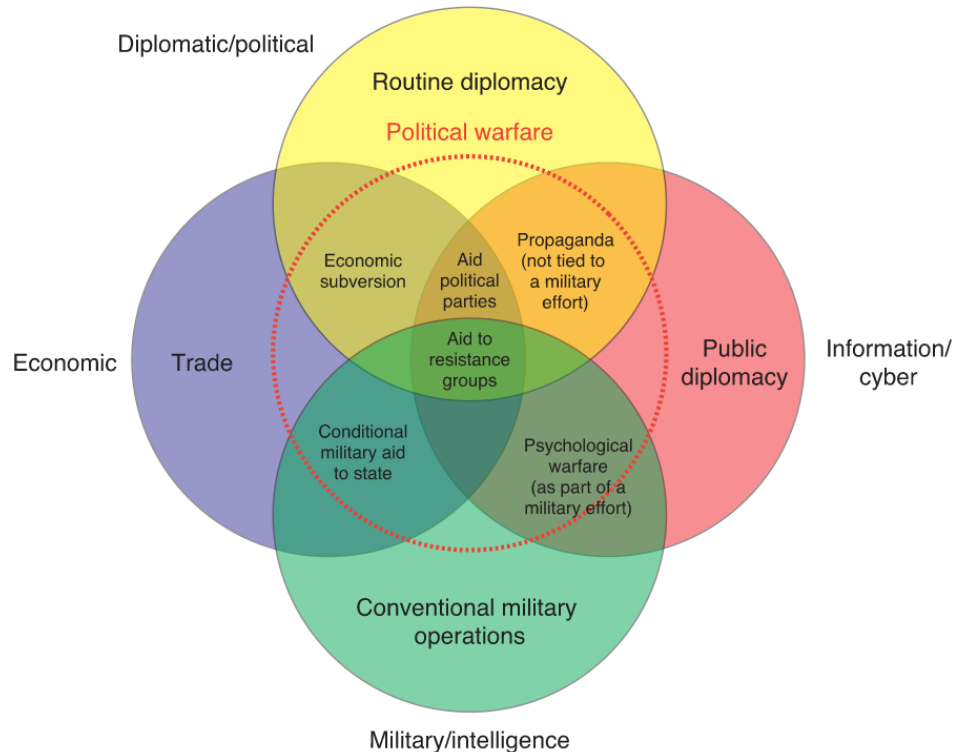
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<sup>13</sup> Mark Stokes and Russell Hsiao, *The People’s Liberation Army General Political Department: Political Warfare with Chinese Characteristics* (n.p: Project 2049 Institute, 2013), 3, P2049\_Stokes\_Hsiao\_PLA\_General\_Political\_Department\_Liaison\_101413.pdf (project2049.net)

<sup>14</sup> Linda Robinson et al, *The Growing Need to Focus on Modern Political Warfare* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2019), 1, The Growing Need to Focus on Modern Political Warfare | RAND

<sup>15</sup> Donovan C. Chau, “Assistance of a Different Kind: Chinese Political Warfare in Ghana, 1958-1966,” *Comparative Strategy* Vol.26, Issue 02 (09 March 2011): 142, <https://www.tandfonline.com/cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1080/01495930701341610?needAccess=true>

command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives.”<sup>16</sup> A common theme across these definitions is that the purpose of political warfare is to function below the legal threshold of war, and in many ways is seen as a viable alternative to full out conflict to achieve strategic aims.<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 1 – Where Political Warfare Fits Within the Implements of Power**

Source: Robinson et al, *The Growing Need to Focus on Modern Political Warfare*, 2.

Kennan’s definition, however, is problematic in his conflation the notions of political warfare and public diplomacy/any other form of statecraft. Although similar, both definitions do present fundamental differences in their objectives and the means by which they look to achieve

<sup>16</sup> Kerry Gershaneck, *Political Warfare: Strategies for Combating China’s Plan to Win Without Fighting* (Quantico: Marine Corps University Press, 2020), 14, [https://www.usmcu.edu/Portals/218/Political%20Warfare\\_web.pdf](https://www.usmcu.edu/Portals/218/Political%20Warfare_web.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Linda Robinson et al, *The Growing Need to Focus on Modern Political Warfare* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2019)...2

them. The main difference revolves around the target audience and intent behind the action. Whilst public diplomacy seeks to *influence* opinions of target audiences in a transparent manner through open public and social engagements, political warfare is usually carried out covertly and ultimately seeks to *manipulate* an adversary's actions and strategies.<sup>18</sup> In essence, it is a much more aggressive and forthcoming concept, and can be characterized as the “hard edge” of soft power.<sup>19</sup>

Political warfare has been used within Chinese political circles for centuries; in fact, it has been steeped in Chinese culture dating back thousands of years. For example, during the Xia-Shang-Zhou period in 2070 BCE, the concept of political warfare as we know it today was called “war of attacking the heart”, a strategy ultimately designed to subdue the will of the enemy and render them defenseless in the event of an armed attack.<sup>20</sup> According to Michael Pillsbury, the Warring States period (~475–221 BCE) in Chinese history serves as a key milestone in understanding China's reliance on political warfare today.<sup>21</sup> In a well-known Chinese narrative from this period, the commander of the Qi state army, General Sun Bin, offered the following advice to Emperor Qi Wei: “In conquering other countries, it is best to attack the heart and capture their minds.”<sup>22</sup> Moreover, one of the key lessons that the Chinese derived from this period is the notion that military might alone will not serve as the critical factor for winning a drawn-out contest.<sup>23</sup> The victor must be prepared to manipulate and coerce his opponent's

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<sup>18</sup> Mark Stokes and Russell Hsiao, *The People's Liberation Army General Political Department: Political Warfare with Chinese Characteristics*... 5.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., “Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy* No.80 (Autumn 1990): 153-171.

<sup>20</sup> Youngjune Chung, “Allusion, Reasoning, and Luring in Chinese Psychological Warfare,” *International Affairs* Vol.97, Issue 04 (July 2021): 1010, <https://academic-oup-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/ia/article/97/4/1007/6294889>

<sup>21</sup> Michael P. Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower* (New York: Henry Holt, 2015), 31–51.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 1010.

<sup>23</sup> Kerry Gershaneck, *Political Warfare: Strategies for Combating China's Plan to “Win Without Fighting.”*...32.

advisors and population; they must *shape* the battlefield psychologically before attacking it *physically*. This theme is constantly referred to in China's ancient texts and history books; from Sun Tzu's *the Art of War* to *The Book of History*, Chinese military and strategic history recognizes that "the war of attacking the heart" of the enemy is a vital component in achieving victory, especially an enemy that has much greater capabilities than one's own forces.<sup>24</sup>

Notwithstanding this history, it is important to emphasize that existence in ancient texts does not imply continuous use or embeddedness in modern culture; nonetheless, the following paragraphs will discuss how Beijing has tapped into these texts for their current strategic approach.

This understanding of the importance of political warfare, or "political work" as it is labeled in modern Chinese narratives, is not limited to ancient Chinese stratagems of a bygone era. According to Alistair Iain Johnston, "...within the China field [of security studies] there seems to be little controversy about the proposition that 'deep' history and culture are critical sources of strategic behavior."<sup>25</sup> Chinese political scientist Yan Xuetong argues in his book *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* that China's current approach to power and strategy can be explained by examining ancient Chinese thought, specifically the warring states that dominated China prior to the unification under the Qin Empire.<sup>26</sup>

The notion of manipulating an enemy and its population has also been adopted by more contemporary Chinese leadership. The revolutionary leader Mao Zedong, having experienced war against both the Japanese occupiers and Chinese nationalists, emphasized that the key to

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<sup>24</sup> Sangkuk Lee, "China's Three Warfares: Origins, Applications, and Organizations," *Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol 37, Issue 02 (April 2014): 200, <https://www.tandfonline-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1080/01402390.2013.870071>

<sup>25</sup> Alastair I. Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 15.

<sup>26</sup> Yan Xuetong, "Pre-Qin Philosophy and China's Rise Today," in *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, ed. Yan Xuetong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 199-203.

defeating a much more powerful enemy lay in “strengthening the political work of one’s own forces as well as weakening the [enemy’s] resolve [...] by conducting propaganda, political mobilization, and psychological offensives.”<sup>27</sup> Mao understood that “propaganda” and “psychological offensives”, if properly leveraged, can become force multipliers and enable the victory of conventional forces. President Xi Jinping, as Mao’s successor, also understands the importance of political warfare in achieving strategic objectives and the “psychological” component of the modern battlefield. Since Xi’s elevation to the top of China’s political hierarchy, Beijing has supposedly become even more sophisticated in its use of political warfare. According to Aaron L. Friedberg, “Beijing is employing a variety of techniques to shape the perceptions of both leaders and elites in the advanced industrial nations (including the United States) as well as in much of the developing world.”<sup>28</sup> Friedberg later asserts that China leverages such methods as funding think-tank research programs, offering lucrative contracts to individuals deemed “friends of China”, and exploiting overseas ethnic Chinese communities to undermine local governments and disseminate Chinese propaganda.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, according to Kerry Gershaneck, political warfare is the *de facto* manner through which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) conducts business and achieves its strategic objectives.<sup>30</sup>

China has continued to modernize its approach to political warfare, by specifically incorporating the concept into the PLA.<sup>31</sup> In late 2015, Beijing adopted sweeping reforms designed to wean the PLA off its traditional overdependence on conventional capabilities by incorporating structural reorganization to highlight the importance given to non-kinetic elements

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<sup>27</sup> Sangkuk Lee, “China’s Three Warfares: Origins, Applications, and Organizations,”...200.

<sup>28</sup> Kerry Gershaneck, *Political Warfare: Strategies for Combating China’s Plan to “Win Without Fighting,”*...8.

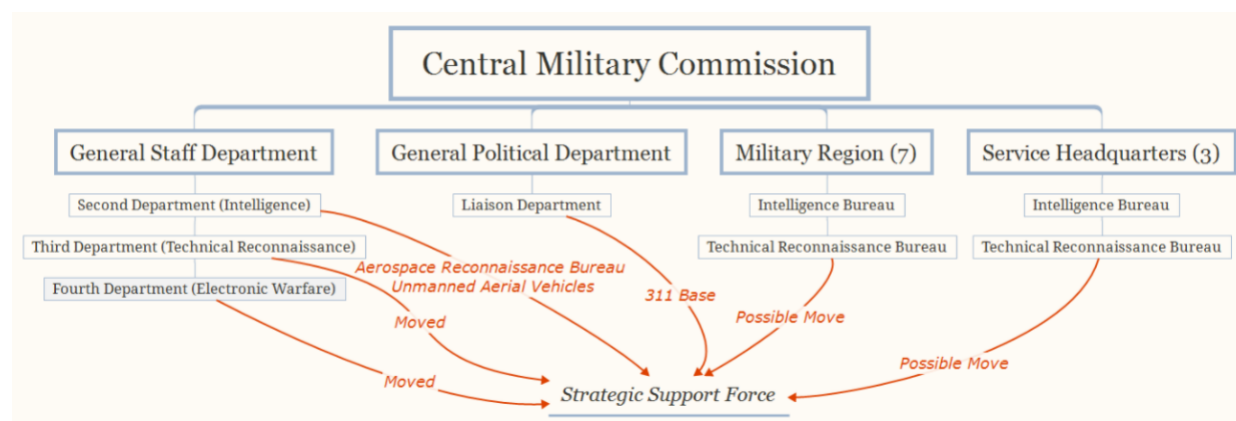
<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>31</sup> John Costello and Joe McReynolds, *China’s Strategic Support Force: A Force for a New Era* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2018), 2.



of its military. One of the highlights of this reorganization is the creation of the Strategic Support Force, or SSF, a theater command-level organization designed to centralize the PLA's non-kinetic and emerging capabilities.<sup>32</sup> As illustrated in Figure 2, the SSF has incorporated a number of non-conventional capabilities that used to reside in other departments of the Central Military Commission, and is now responsible for executing the three warfares as well as the PLA's information, cyber, electronic, and space warfare.<sup>33</sup> By focusing the majority of the capabilities and actions that fall under political warfare within the SSF, China has taken a significant step forward in streamlining its non-kinetic potential in achieving its strategic objectives.



**Figure 2 – Strategic Support Force**

Source: Mattis et al, *Modernizing Military Intelligence: Playing Catchup (Part Two)*

The question arises then, why does China choose to continue to resort to the use of political warfare in modern times? According to Peter Mattis, the reason is two-fold: the need to preserve the power of the CCP, and the tacit acknowledgement that the PLA's conventional

<sup>32</sup> John Costello and Joe McReynolds, *China's Strategic Support Force: A Force for a New Era...* 13.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Mattis and Elsia Kania, "Modernizing Military Intelligence: Playing Catchup (Part Two)," *The Jamestown Foundation, China Brief Vol.16, Issue 19* (21 December 2016), <https://jamestown.org/program/modernizing-military-intelligence-playing-catchup-part-two/>

capabilities alone are too weak to preserve such power.<sup>34</sup> The strategy of the three warfares, as a subset of Chinese political warfare, was specifically delineated to help Beijing alleviate that deficiency and bolster the PLA's conventional capabilities. Chinese military writings put a specific emphasis on the importance of the three warfares in influencing an adversary so as to *coerce* them into compliance, without the need to resort to open conflict.<sup>35</sup> In the case where war is unavoidable, the three warfares are meant to influence international opinion and an enemy's leadership, domestic population, and military prior to the breakout of hostilities in order to enable a battlefield victory.<sup>36</sup> It is a strategy that incorporates all of the tenets of political warfare, while operating below the threshold of war; in other words, to win without fighting.

### **The Three Warfares**

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China first formally recognized the strategy of the three warfares in 2003.<sup>37</sup> Described as an instrument of “wartime political work”, the development of the three warfares was assigned to the General Political Department, the department known to specialize in diverse political, financial, military, and intelligence operations, before being transferred to the SSF in late 2015.<sup>38</sup> At its core, the strategy of the three warfares is tasked to conduct media, psychological and legal warfare against an adversary in

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<sup>34</sup> John Costello and Peter Mattis, “Electronic Warfare and the Renaissance of Chinese Information Operations,” in *China's Evolving Military Strategy*, ed. Joe McReynolds (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), 179-180, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cfvlibrary-ebooks/reader.action?docID=4771916>

<sup>35</sup> Dean Cheng, “Winning Without Fighting: Chinese Public Opinion Warfare and the Need for a Robust American Response,” *The Heritage Foundation*, no.2745 (November 2012): 5, [https://thf\\_media.s3.amazonaws.com/2012/pdf/bg2745.pdf](https://thf_media.s3.amazonaws.com/2012/pdf/bg2745.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Dean Cheng, “Winning Without Fighting: Chinese Public Opinion Warfare and the Need for a Robust American Response,” *The Heritage Foundation*, no.2745 (November 2012): 5, [https://thf\\_media.s3.amazonaws.com/2012/pdf/bg2745.pdf](https://thf_media.s3.amazonaws.com/2012/pdf/bg2745.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Sangkuk Lee, “China's Three Warfares: Origins, Applications, and Organizations,”... 199.

<sup>38</sup> Morgan Clemens and Benjamin Rosen, “The Impact of Reform on the PLA's Political Work System,” in *The People and the PLA 2.0*, ed. Roy Kamphausen (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2021), 31, <https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/3752.pdf>

order to erode its will and portray Chinese actions in a positive light. China understands that a critical component of modern warfare is the battle for narratives, with the side that has the most favourable story gaining a psychological edge over its enemies. As such, the three warfares are presented by Chinese military officials as a force multiplier that causes a “powerful psychological deterrent force against the enemy officers and men and achieving the effect of yielding twice the result with half the effort.”<sup>39</sup>

Specifically, the three warfares strategy seeks to shift a potential future conflict in China’s favour by focusing on retaining the support of one’s own population, the international system, and subduing the will of an opponent. According to Elsa B. Kania, the three warfares strategy establishes “a perceptual preparation of the battlefield that is seen as critical to advancing [Chinese] interests during both peace and war.”<sup>40</sup> As a rule, the three warfares can be described as “phase 0” operations, or the shaping phase of a conflict where forces are prepositioned and the environment is made to be conducive for future operations. China’s doctrine asserts that their use begins *prior* to combat operations and then continues through all operational phases, with the objective being to subdue the adversary without engaging in direct combat. Although the three warfares can be implemented across all levels of war, its focus is primarily on the strategic and operational levels where it can best leverage the tools of propaganda, psychological operations and legal ambiguity to achieve its objectives.

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<sup>39</sup> Academy of Military Science, *The Science of Military Strategy (2013)*, ed. and trans. Project Everest (Montgomery: China Aerospace Studies Institute, 2021), 163, [https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/CASI/documents/Translations/2021-02-08%20Chinese%20Military%20Thoughts-%20In%20their%20own%20words%20Science%20of%20Military%20Strategy%202013.pdf?ver=NxAWg4BPw\\_NyIEjxaha8Aw%3d%3d](https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/CASI/documents/Translations/2021-02-08%20Chinese%20Military%20Thoughts-%20In%20their%20own%20words%20Science%20of%20Military%20Strategy%202013.pdf?ver=NxAWg4BPw_NyIEjxaha8Aw%3d%3d)

<sup>40</sup> Kerry Gershaneck, *Political Warfare: Strategies for Combating China’s Plan to “Win Without Fighting.”*...56.

## Media Warfare

Public opinion/media warfare is usually considered as “first among equals” because it seeks to shape the environment that will allow the other two to operate effectively.<sup>41</sup> Media warfare’s primary focus is in influencing both domestic and international public opinion in order to engender support for China’s activities while dissuading an adversary from pursuing policies perceived to be adverse to Chinese interests.<sup>42</sup> For China, media warfare started to gain prominence as a viable tactic following the First Gulf War. That conflict had forced the PLA to undergo an internal revolution from “mechanized warfare” to “industrial warfare”, where the wars of the future were conceptualized as less about physical contests or high-tech weaponry, and more about cognitive and information contests between combatants and popular sentiment.<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, the 2013 PLA authoritative document *The Science of Military Strategy* acknowledges “the rapid development of new media as represented by the internet has made the right of speech become yet another form of expression of seizing and holding the initiative in local war under informationized conditions.”<sup>44</sup> Controlling such media will not only have an impact on how the nation is perceived domestically, but also on its ability to garner sympathy and support from the international community.”<sup>45</sup>

President Xi recognized the importance of influencing foreign audiences view of Beijing when in a speech in August 2013 he stated that “China should spread new ideas and new

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<sup>41</sup> Dean Cheng, "Winning Without Fighting: Chinese Public Opinion Warfare and the Need for a Robust American Response," ... 4.

<sup>42</sup> Dean Cheng, "Winning Without Fighting: Chinese Public Opinion Warfare and the Need for a Robust American Response," ... 4.

<sup>43</sup> Youngjune Chung, “Hybrid Challenges in the PRC’s Novel Public Opinion Warfare,” *Inha Journal of International Studies* Vol.36, Issue 03 (December 2021): 413, <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1111/pafo.12194>

<sup>44</sup> Academy of Military Science, *The Science of Military Strategy* (2013)... 162.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

perspectives to emerging and developing states [and] strengthen media coverage ... use innovative outreach methods ... tell a good Chinese story, and promote China's views internationally."<sup>46</sup> In other words, leverage newly available technologies to accomplish old ideas. To sway public opinion, China has been known to include paid advertisements into prominent international newspapers, with particular emphasis placed on such themes as Chinese contributions to the the US economy and the PLA's commitment to international peace and stability.<sup>47</sup>

China's extensive global media network, including networks such as the Xinhua News Agency and China Central Television (CCTV), also plays a pivotal role by broadcasting "China-friendly" messages throughout the regions of Africa, Central Asia, Europe, and Latin America.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, by emphasizing the justice of one's cause while portraying the adversary's as unjust, China seeks to secure the support of its population and shield it from the effects of enemy propaganda, thereby garnering international sympathy. For these objectives to be achieved, it requires careful preparation during peacetime. As the PLA saying goes: "Before the troops and horses move, public opinion is already underway (*bingma weidong, yulun xianxing*)," emphasizing the requirement for public opinion warfare to begin ahead of the actual conflict.<sup>49</sup> Ultimately, the side that broadcasts its message first enjoys a significant advantage. The objective is to define the parameters of coverage – and in doing so, undermine an opponent's will to resist.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Anne-Marie Brady, "China's Foreign Propaganda Machine," *Wilson Centre*, 26 Octobre 2015, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/chinas-foreign-propaganda-machine>.

<sup>47</sup> Laura Jackson, "Revisions of Reality: The Three Warfares – China's New Way of War,"... 8.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>49</sup> Dean Cheng, "Winning Without Fighting: Chinese Public Opinion Warfare and the Need for a Robust American Response,"... 5.

<sup>50</sup> Dean Cheng, "Winning Without Fighting: Chinese Public Opinion Warfare and the Need for a Robust American Response,"... 4.

## Psychological Warfare

The Canadian Armed Forces defines psychological operations as “using methods of communications and other means directed to approved audiences in order to influence perceptions, attitudes and behaviour, affecting the achievement of political and military objectives”.<sup>51</sup> Psychological warfare primarily targets an opponent’s decision-making capability by creating doubts about narrative, and fomenting anti-leadership sentiments with an ultimate purpose of shattering the opposing military’s will.<sup>52</sup> A favourite tactic of the Chinese involves fostering anti-war elements and encouraging war-weariness within a hostile leadership.<sup>53</sup> According to the Chinese, psychological warfare includes, amongst others, diplomatic pressure, coercion, bribery, and harassment, each one designed to divide into factions and ultimately weaken the enemy’s combat power.<sup>54</sup> Instead of focusing on equipment or supplies, the objective of psychological warfare is the mind of the decision-makers and for those minds to shape/make decisions favourable to desired outcomes.

According to Dean Cheng, psychological warfare is seen by China as a critical component of future conflicts, affecting the very perceptions that inform decision-making.<sup>55</sup> Successful application of psychological warfare will therefore impact every level of military operations, thereby influencing the outcome. Hence, psychological warfare’s aim is to foster uncertainty and indecisiveness across an adversary’s leadership, and in doing so degrade the ability to generate momentum and cohesion within a force. In line with the ancient Chinese

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<sup>51</sup> Department of National Defence, B-GJ-005-313/FP-001, *Psychological Operations* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2004): 1-1.

<sup>52</sup> Dean Cheng, "Winning Without Fighting: Chinese Public Opinion Warfare and The Need for a Robust American Response,"... 3.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Sangkuk Lee, “China’s Three Warfares: Origins, Applications, and Organizations,”...203; Kerry Gershaneck, *Political Warfare: Strategies for Combating China’s Plan to “Win Without Fighting,”*...19.

<sup>55</sup> Dean Cheng, "Winning Without Fighting: The Chinese Psychological Warfare Challenge,"... 2.

notion of a “war of attacking the heart”, Chinese psychological warfare emphasizes that “when one defeats the enemy, it is not solely by killing the enemy, or winning a piece of ground, but is mainly in terms of cowing the enemy’s heart.”<sup>56</sup>

## Legal Warfare

Joel Trachtman sees modern conflicts being waged in a “law-rich environment, with an abundance of legal rules and legal fora.”<sup>57</sup> Legal warfare, or “lawfare” as it is mostly known in the literature, has come to mean a variety of things; for the PLA, it consists of employing and interpreting legal matters in order to justify one’s own actions while portraying an opponent’s activities as unlawful, thereby sowing doubt and confusion concerning the justification of an opponent’s actions.<sup>58</sup> When writing on the concept of legal warfare back in 2001, Colonel Charles Dunlap observed that lawfare was being conducted not for the sake of adhering to the Law of Armed Conflict, but to “destroy the will to fight by undermining the public support that is indispensable” for successful military operations, especially in Western democracies.<sup>59</sup> According to Justin Nankivell, lawfare can also involve the “selective use of the law to gain an unfair advantage by not complying with what a legal rule permits or prevents.”<sup>60</sup> Legal warfare can thus be characterized as the “exploitation” of the legal system towards political aims. By incorporating legal warfare into its strategy, Beijing understands that the centre of gravity of Western liberal democracies is the support of their population. As such, there has been a tacit

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<sup>56</sup> Dean Cheng, *Cyber Dragon: Inside China’s Information Warfare and Cyber Operations* (Santa Barbara: Praeger publishing, 2017), 47. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cfvlibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4723164>

<sup>57</sup> Joel Trachtman, “Integrating Lawfare and Warfare,” *Boston College International and Comparative Law Review* Vol. 39, Issue 02 (2016): 267, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1823083537?parentSessionId=P2II%2BhRmICt0KnygmNTJLV1Ksl8SbgGopa7ngAz7i0%3D&pq-origsite=summon&accountid=9867>

<sup>58</sup> Dean Cheng, “Winning Without Fighting: Chinese Legal Warfare,” *The Heritage Foundation*, no.2692 (May 2012): 2, <https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/winning-without-fighting-chinese-legal-warfare>.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Stefan Halper, *China: The Three Warfares...* 53.

recognition that the use of legal warfare can be considered a vulnerability to Western democracies. As an example, the 2005 US National Defense Strategy (NDS) placed legal warfare, defined as “judicial processes” in the document, alongside terrorism in its list of American vulnerabilities.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, although not mentioning China directly, the 2008 NDS noted that there is a significant concern with movements “hiding behind international norms and national laws when it suits them, and attempting to subvert them when it does not.”<sup>62</sup>

This exploitation of the legal system stems from the distinct difference in how the law is understood and interpreted in China, as compared to Western states. Whereas in the West the rule of law applies equally to both the governed and those who govern, in China the law is seen as a tool that can be manipulated and by which those in authority can enforce their views on the population.<sup>63</sup> Mao confirmed this characterization of the law as a tool of government when he stated that the law “should serve as an ideological instrument of politics.”<sup>64</sup> Moreover, in addition to former Chinese President Jiang Zemin declaring in 1996 that international law “can be used as a weapon to defend the interests of our state”, PLA doctrine confirms that China must not be bound by specific articles of international law.<sup>65</sup> China has continually been manipulating the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to gain an advantage for its claims in the South and East China seas.<sup>66</sup> In an example of the exploitation of domestic law, Beijing has designated the village of Sansha on the Paracel islands (a disputed archipelago in the

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<sup>61</sup> US Department of Defense, *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America (2005)* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 2005), 5, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=452255>

<sup>62</sup> US Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy (2008)* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 2008), 2, <https://www.oas.org/csh/spanish/documentos/2008%20National%20Defense%20Strategy.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> Laura Jackson, "Revisions of Reality: The Three Warfares – China’s New Way of War,"... 6.

<sup>64</sup> Stefan Halper, *China: The Three Warfares...* 49.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 50.

<sup>66</sup> Guifang Xue, “China and the Law of the Sea: An Update,” in *International Law and Military Operations Volume 84*, ed. Michael Carsten (Newport: Naval War College, 2008), 97, <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/ils/vol84/iss1/17/>



South China Sea) as part of its Hainan province, thereby extending China's administrative hold in the South China Sea.<sup>67</sup>

Targeting the opinion of an adversary's population, coercing its leadership, and leveraging legal clauses is not a novel technique of warfare, nor is it uniquely Chinese. Examples such as Radio Liberty, Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America have illustrated that the United States, especially throughout the last century, has been exceptionally adept at employing modern communication and information means to influence the adversary's ideological domain.<sup>68</sup> Given prior Western actions and history, from Beijing's perspective, its use of the three warfares is doing exactly what it perceives as the West's proclivity to leverage these same techniques as justification for its actions.

The West has been known to utilize aspects of the three warfares in its past conflicts, albeit with little success. For example, Washington's claims of Iraq comprising an "Axis of Evil" and possessing weapons of mass destruction proved successful in initially isolating Baghdad in the lead up of the 2003 invasion.<sup>69</sup> However, Washington subsequently squandered its post 9/11 soft power advantage, sowed distrust among allies, promoted misguided intelligence, and misled both domestic and global audiences on the pretext for war. Psychological warfare was undertaken by the French in their counterinsurgency campaign in Algeria in the 1950s. The French military established in 1955 the *Bureau régional d'action psychologique*, an agency for psychological action that was formalized and deployed throughout the 10<sup>th</sup> Algerian Military

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<sup>67</sup> Stefan Halper, *China: The Three Warfares...* 13.

<sup>68</sup> Examples include the Radio Free Europe broadcast during the Cold War. See Ross A. Johnson and Eugene R. Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, A Collection of Studies and Documents* (Budapest: Central European University press, 2010), Chapter 3 and 5.

<sup>69</sup> Dean Cheng, "Chinese Lessons From The Gulf War," in *Chinese Lessons From Other People's Wars*, ed. Andrew Scobell et al (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, November 2011), 157, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA553490.pdf>

Region.<sup>70</sup> Despite these initiatives, the use of psychological warfare backfired for the French, who have been criticized to this day for what effectively added up to torture. Despite these Western shortcomings, it is still interesting to note that China openly acknowledges previous Western experiences, specifically American, as direct influences for the conception of the three warfares strategy.

### **Influences from US Combat Operations**

Considering that the Chinese military has not engaged in major combat operations since 1979, its senior officials have studiously analyzed and studied foreign campaigns in order to discern key lessons that could prove vital in future conflicts. None were more analyzed than the US military campaigns in the 1990s and the early 2000s. According to former White House Advisor Rush Doshi, during that period China began changing its views of the US from that of a quasi-ally against the USSR to becoming Beijing's greatest threat and "main adversary."<sup>71</sup> By studying the US interventions in Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq, Chinese military strategists perceived the increasingly pivotal role those non-kinetic capabilities play in securing victory in contemporary conflicts.

The notion to specifically leverage media, psychological, and legal domains for one's purpose was heavily influenced by post-Cold War US combat operations. Furthermore, to properly understand the three warfares, it is important to comprehend the significant role that US information warfare theory has played in the last thirty years on China. In the words of the Chinese Academy of Military Science, "the 1999 Kosovo War and the 2003 Iraq War gave us a

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<sup>70</sup> Pierre Pahlavi, "Political Warfare is a Double-Edged Sword : The Rise and Fall of The French Counterinsurgency in Algeria," *Canadian Military Journal* Vol.8, no.04 (Winter 2007-2008): 54, <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vo8/no4/pahlavi-eng.asp>

<sup>71</sup> Rush Doshi, *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 49.

glimpse of the vivid realities of local wars under informationized conditions, providing us with many lessons.”<sup>72</sup> In Beijing’s perspective, the US’ ability to leverage their own version of the three warfares enabled Washington to impose favourable conditions even before hostilities began. Moreover, the Chinese witnessed how integrating these information operations into American warfighting capabilities enabled Washington to initially justify the wars, exercise damage control as in the case of Abu Ghraib and despite some protests occurring against the invasions, nevertheless maintain broad American support at the outset of these wars.<sup>73</sup>

As the first major conflict following the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the 1991 Gulf War, amongst other things, highlighted to the PLA the value of a powerful narrative in enabling victory. President Bush’s diplomatic efforts to rally a “coalition of the willing” by leveraging international bodies like the UN to provide a legal framework for intervention, portraying Saddam Hussein as an aggressor with expansionist ambitions, while also inducing Iraqi field commanders to surrender or retreat through the use of psychological warfare, all demonstrated the importance of a carefully constructed narrative.<sup>74</sup> In other words, foreign governments, their people, and one’s own population became as important a target as enemy soldiers and military installations. According to PLA analysts, this conflict saw the strategy behind the three warfares conducted at an “unprecedented scale and intensity, from the tactical to the strategic level, and engaging a range of both military and nonmilitary measures.”<sup>75</sup> In fact, Peter Mattis has indicated

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<sup>72</sup> M. Taylor Fravel, “Shifts in Warfare and Party Unity: Explaining China’s Changes in Military Strategy,” *International Security* Vol. 42, Issue 03 (Winter 2017/2018): 80, [https://direct-mit-edu.cfc.idm.oclc.org/isec/article/42/3/37/12182/Shifts-in-Warfare-and-Party-Unity-Explaining-China](https://direct.mit.edu.cfc.idm.oclc.org/isec/article/42/3/37/12182/Shifts-in-Warfare-and-Party-Unity-Explaining-China)

<sup>73</sup> Andrew Scobell et al, “Introduction,” in *Chinese Lessons From Other People’s Wars*, ed. Andrew Scobell et al (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, November 2011), 6, <https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/2163.pdf>

<sup>74</sup> Dean Cheng, “Chinese Lessons From The Gulf War,”...156.

<sup>75</sup> Timothy Walton, “Firing First Effectively: Lessons the Chinese Have Drawn from the Way the US Enters Conflict that Informs their Use of The Three Warfares,” in *China: The Three Warfares*, ed. Stefan Halper, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2013): 347, <https://cryptome.org/2014/06/prc-three-wars.pdf>.

that it was *because* of the Gulf War experience that Chinese military analysts began to see a trend that they described as “peacetime-wartime integration.”<sup>76</sup>

The Wars of the Yugoslav Succession in the mid-to-late 1990s further solidified China’s observations; in fact, public opinion was considered a key factor in the outcome of that conflict.<sup>77</sup> The campaign against Serbian strongman Slobodan Milošević by NATO forces was seen as a combination of both lethal and non-lethal means in the form of NATO’s aerial bombardment and public diplomacy, respectively. Such an approach ultimately undermined popular support for Milošević, while preserving domestic support at home in NATO countries and ensuring the views of the international community remained firmly against the Serbian dictator. Moreover, Washington’s insistence on not waiting for a Security Council resolution to act was interpreted by Beijing as an example where international norms can be manipulated by the proper narrative to satisfy strategic objectives.<sup>78</sup>

Finally, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 provided additional impetus and justification for the development and application of the three warfares.<sup>79</sup> Chinese President Jiang Zemin, following the conclusion of hostilities in the Second Gulf War, pointed out that ‘the conduct of [three warfares] through the use of modern mass media is an important measure for warring countries which attempt to grasp the political initiative and military victory.’<sup>80</sup> In particular, the US’s ability to leverage public opinion prior to the invasion for its own purposes demonstrated its prowess to Chinese authorities. The war on public opinion began long before the first shots were

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<sup>76</sup> John Costello and Peter Mattis, “Electronic Warfare and the Renaissance of Chinese Information Operations,”...197-198.

<sup>77</sup> Stefan Halper, *China: The Three Warfares*... 34.

<sup>78</sup> Timothy Walton, “Firing First Effectively: Lessons the Chinese Have Drawn from the Way the US Enters Conflict that Informs their Use of The Three Warfares,”... 346.

<sup>79</sup> Three Warfares doctrine was published in November 2003, 8 months following the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

<sup>80</sup> Sangkuk Lee, “China’s Three Warfares: Origins, Applications, and Organizations,”...202.

fired over Baghdad in March 2003. As soon as the First Gulf War came to an end, American media began to portray Saddam Hussein and his followers as threats to regional and world peace.<sup>81</sup> Over time, these narratives began to permeate American politics and the larger international consciousness. Furthermore, China observed how Washington leveraged UN Resolution 1441, which claimed that Iraq remained in material breach of its obligations to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors, and their procedures to search for weapons of mass destruction.<sup>82</sup> In what Beijing considered an astute application of legal warfare, Washington was able to take advantage of these Iraqi violations as a legal baseline upon which it could launch Operation Iraqi Freedom, despite a lack of a formal UN Security Council resolution.

In addition to these efforts, once the decision to go to war was announced, an “Office of Global Communications” was established in the White House to centrally coordinate and manage the flow of information regarding operations and US military performance.<sup>83</sup> The purpose of this office was to establish a public opinion and information operations campaign in parallel to the ground manoeuvre plan.<sup>84</sup> The office was used to inundate both the Iraqi military and the civilian population with messaging whose purpose was to undermine Iraq’s will to fight and the people’s faith in their leadership.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, in an illustration of how one’s own biases shape the perception of others, Chinese authorities would describe the US media as subordinate to American authorities and actively influencing the American population to support the war.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Laura Jackson, "Revisions of Reality: The Three Warfares – China’s New Way of War,"... 5.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>83</sup> Dean Cheng, “Chinese Lessons From The Gulf War,”...178.

<sup>84</sup> Dean Cheng, “Chinese Lessons From The Gulf War,”...178.

<sup>85</sup> Sheng Peilin, Wang Lin, and Liu Ya, *100 Examples of Public Opinion Warfare* (Beijing: PLA Publishing House, 2006), 162–163, 208–209.

<sup>86</sup> Dean Cheng, “Chinese Lessons From The Gulf War,”...178.

Furthermore, as part of what the Chinese deemed “media warfare”, the embedding of journalists with US forces was seen as a means to establish an official discourse. The 2013 edition of the *Science of Military Strategy* highlighted that “the on-the-spot reports from the battleground correspondents on one hand reflected the highly efficient operational capability of the US-British joint forces, and produced [shock and] awe in the enemy and potential opponents.”<sup>87</sup>

One of the key lessons derived by Beijing from these conflicts is the requirement to build capacity in global access and broadcasting. As such, the Chinese began to develop a much more engaged and widespread strategic communications infrastructure, which included the creation of a 24-hour English language global news service under the news agency Xinhua, as well as expanding the state-owned China Central Television to a global audience.<sup>88</sup> Whereas in the past the Chinese Foreign Ministry would only offer twice a week press, in September 2011 the Ministry began offering daily briefings.<sup>89</sup> These initiatives were the direct result of how Beijing interpreted US success through the use of non-lethal shaping operations to enable its kinetic action.

The descriptions of the three warfares, coupled with the desire to understand and apply US information operations, illustrates the importance that the PLA places on what the RAND corporation calls the “cognitive space” of war.<sup>90</sup> Their use leverages peacetime preparations to establish favourable conditions if a conflict, kinetic or not, takes root. The three warfares, therefore, reflect China’s belief that war cannot solely be described as a struggle between armies,

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<sup>87</sup> Academy of Military Science, *The Science of Military Strategy (2013)*... 162.

<sup>88</sup> Dean Cheng, "Winning Without Fighting: Chinese Public Opinion Warfare and the Need for a Robust American Response,"... 7.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Edmund J. Burke et al, *People’s Liberation Army Operational Concepts* (n.p.: RAND Corporation, 2020), 15, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA394-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA394-1.html)

but also a struggle across all the levers of a nation's comprehensive power. Beijing understands that direct military engagement with the US will not serve its interests, nor does it necessarily have the military capabilities to be successful in such an endeavor. Hence, even though the continued development of conventional military power will likely remain a top priority, China will likely leverage its unconventional tactics such as the three warfares to attempt to achieve its strategic objectives without entangling itself in an armed conflict. The following chapters will examine the practical application of the three warfares and whether this strategy has enabled Beijing to achieve its strategic objectives.

## CHAPTER 3 - TAIWAN

The US State department recently approved a third arms deal to Taiwan since the beginning of President Biden's term in office.<sup>91</sup> The latest approval, worth approximately \$95 million dollars, will further support the island's defences by providing Taipei with further training and fielding of the Patriot Air Defence system, a move that will likely further antagonize relations with Beijing.<sup>92</sup> Taiwan has been one of Beijing's primary focal points since the end of the Chinese Civil War that brought the Communist party into power in 1949. Recently, tensions between China and Taiwan have been the highest in decades since the election of current Taiwanese President Tsai Ing Wen and her pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party in 2016.<sup>93</sup> Under the leadership of President Tsai, Taiwan has taken a firm stance against China's proposal of a "one country, two systems", a strategy of "peaceful" reunification proposed by Beijing since the 1990s.<sup>94</sup>

Alongside Macao and Hong Kong, China continues to view Taiwan as an inherent part of its sovereign territory. Although there are numerous debates as to the level of Chinese adherence

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<sup>91</sup> Anthony Capaccio, "First Taiwan Arms Sale in Biden Administration is Approved," *Bloomberg*, 04 August 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-04/first-arms-sale-to-taiwan-by-biden-administration-is-approved>. The first arms sale to Taiwan under the Biden administration came in August 2021 and was worth \$750 Million. It consisted of 40 Paladin self-propelled Howitzers and 20 field artillery ammunition supply vehicles. The second arms sale came in February 2022 and was worth \$100 Million consisting of equipment and services to maintain and support the Patriot Air Defence Missile system.

<sup>92</sup> Al Jazeera, "US Approves \$95M Patriot Weapons Support for Taiwan," *Al Jazeera News*, 06 April 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/6/us-approves-95m-weapons-sale-for-taiwan>. Also, for China's antagonism towards the US with regards to arms sales to Taiwan see Ho Veng-Si, "Chinese Views on US Arms Sales to Taiwan," *The Fletcher Forum* Vol.7, No.02 (Summer 1983): 373-384, <https://heinonline-org.cfc.idm.oclc.org/HOL/Page?lname=VENG-SI&handle=hein.journals/forwa7&collection=&page=373&collection=journals>

<sup>93</sup> See Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, "Taiwan Election Outcome Heightens Tensions with China," 17 January 2020, <https://www.asiapacific.ca/publication/taiwan-election-outcome-heightens-tensions-china>. President Tsai was reelected for a second term with a record-breaking 8.1 million votes, which constitutes the largest margin of victory for any Taiwanese president since the island's first democratic elections were held in 1996. This is also the reason why tensions with China have escalated.

<sup>94</sup> Mari Saito, Yimou Lee, and David Lague, "The Leader who is Standing Up to China," *Reuters*, Last Modified 24 December 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/taiwan-china-tsai/>



to its publicly stated policy and strategic perspectives, reviewing its official and unclassified documentation does provide broad insights into Beijing's goals vis-à-vis Taiwan. For example, in December 2010 Chinese state councilor Dai Bingguo, who was one of the most senior figures in the Chinese foreign policy department under President Hu Jintao, publicly claimed that reunification with Taiwan is a core national interest for Beijing and that it “will absolutely not allow Taiwan to be separated from China and will definitely make no promise to give up the use of force.”<sup>95</sup> During an event celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “Message to the compatriots of Taiwan”, President Xi stated unequivocally that “[...] since 1949 the Communist Party, along with the Government and the People of China, have always considered the following as our enduring mission of history: solving the Taiwan issue and realizing the complete unification of our fatherland.”<sup>96</sup> Moreover, China's defence publications also affirm the same messaging with regards to Taiwan: The 2015 Defence White Paper confirms that “reunification with Taiwan is an inevitable trend,” while the 2019 version asserts that to “solve the Taiwan question and achieve complete reunification of the country is in the fundamental interests of the Chinese nation and essential to realizing national rejuvenation.”<sup>97</sup>

Assuming that Beijing does indeed intend to proceed with the reunification with Taiwan, the question that arises is which strategies will China use to achieve this objective? In the context of the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, it is not difficult to envision a situation where

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<sup>95</sup> Jason R. Fritz, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Evolution of Strategic Doctrine* (New York: Lexington Books, 2017), 131, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cfvlibrary-ebooks/reader.action?docID=4812814&ppg=178>.

<sup>96</sup> Roger C. Liu, “From ‘Sticks’ To ‘Carrots’ And ‘Nets’ , Then to ‘Needles’: The Evolution of the CPC's Policy Towards Taiwan,” *China Report* Vol.58, Issue 01 (February 2022): 90, [https://journals-sagepub-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1177/00094455221074255?utm\\_source=summon&utm\\_medium=discovery-provider](https://journals-sagepub-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1177/00094455221074255?utm_source=summon&utm_medium=discovery-provider)

<sup>97</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, Steven Colley and Michael Wang, *Chinese Strategy And Military Modernization in 2015* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 6; State Council Information Office of the PRC, *2019 Defence White Paper: China's National Defence in The New Era*, trans. Andrew Erickson (July 2019), <https://www.andrewerickson.com/2019/07/full-text-of-defense-white-paper-chinas-national-defense-in-the-new-era-english-chinese-versions/>

Beijing employs its military capital to retake the island by force. Although this option will always exist and it would be unwise to completely disregard it, it continues to be an unlikely course of action for Beijing, for a number of reasons. In the Post-Cold War period, China realized that its application of hard power not only lagged behind that of the US and the West but, as was witnessed during the 1995-1996 Taiwan Straits Crisis, its actual use would be counter-productive, as it would turn global public opinion against itself.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, as is currently being witnessed in response to Russia's continued violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, retaking and reunifying the island by force would likely not be in China's interest as such move would prompt a strong Western response, as well as strain China's untested armed forces.<sup>99</sup> Finally, China would need to stage significant forces across from Taiwan in order to prepare for an amphibious assault on the island, a buildup which would likely be noticed by Western intelligence agencies and thereby rob China of the element of surprise. Indeed, Western intelligence had warned Ukraine of an impending invasion; evidence of an amphibious assault would be very difficult to hide.

An indirect approach to secure China's strategic objective would be a more favourable option, one that would avoid a direct military confrontation with the West. It is likely for this reason that the three warfares have emerged as a foundational strategy in Beijing's efforts to bring about the reunification of Taiwan.<sup>100</sup> According to J. Michael Cole, China's current approach to Taiwan rests on three principal objectives: shape the dominant narrative so as to tarnish the image of the current government and thereby undermine support for democracy;

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<sup>98</sup> Chris J. Kelshaw, "The Three Warfares: PLA Soft Power Aspirations Along The Cognitive Dimension," (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2011), 36, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADB372300.pdf>

<sup>99</sup> Jason R. Fritz, *China's Cyber Warfare: The Evolution of Strategic Doctrine...* 164.

<sup>100</sup> Charity S. Jacobs and Kathleen M. Carley, "Taiwan: China's Gray Zone Doctrine in Action," *Small Wars Journal*, 11 February 2022, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/taiwan-chinas-gray-zone-doctrine-action>

challenge any notion of objective truth, forcing the population to question the information that is provided to them by their government; and to slowly wear down the will of the Taiwanese government to resist by forcing it to respond to every piece of disinformation aimed at it.<sup>101</sup> It is a strategy founded upon the misuse and manipulation of information in order to ultimately wear down any form of resistance to Beijing's rule and influence. As will be discussed in the following paragraphs, this strategy is an illustration of the three warfares at play, specifically those of media and psychological warfare. By leveraging this approach, Beijing likely hopes that Taiwan's social structures would be weakened enough to the extent that its society will no longer be able to resist China's pull.

### **Media Warfare**

Media warfare is employed against Taiwan primarily to demoralize and divide the population alongside complementary strategies such as military threats, diplomatic containment, and economic absorption.<sup>102</sup> China has invested significant resources over the years in establishing media sources that specifically target the population in Taiwan with pro-Beijing messaging. Moreover, one of the organs of the Chinese State Council, the Taiwan Affairs Office, is tasked with the specific purpose to oversee Taiwan related propaganda activities and agencies.<sup>103</sup> In the election of President Ma Ying-Jeou in 2008, who contrary to his predecessors had established warm relations with China, the US intelligence community assessed that the PLA may have leveraged the three warfares leading up to the election for the purposes of discrediting

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<sup>101</sup> Li-wen Tung, "Taiwan and the CCP's Public Opinion Warfare," *Taiwan's Strategists* Issue 02 (June 2019): 48, <https://www.pf.org.tw/files/6510/91DA9418-BA3D-4677-A123-BEA9870F5114>

<sup>102</sup> Kerry Gershaneck, "Media Warfare: How Taiwan Can Win the Battle for the Cognitive Domain," *Prospect and Exploration Magazine* Vol.19, Issue 01 (January 2021): 66, [http://taiwanfellowship.ncl.edu.tw/files/scholar\\_publish/2009-fygsdueaoagxanu.pdf](http://taiwanfellowship.ncl.edu.tw/files/scholar_publish/2009-fygsdueaoagxanu.pdf)

<sup>103</sup> Anne-Marie Brady, "China's Foreign Propaganda Machine," *Wilson Centre*, 26 Octobre 2015, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/chinas-foreign-propaganda-machine>.

incumbent President Chen Shui-bian through disinformation and propaganda.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, during the midterm elections of 2018, Taipei was targeted by a substantial Chinese disinformation campaign that played a significant role in electing Han Kuo-yu, a pro-Chinese candidate, to mayor of Taiwan's second largest city.<sup>105</sup> During the last presidential election and as a way to prevent the re-election of the pro-Western candidate, the island's 23 million residents were inundated with anti-Tsai content through various social media platforms. This wave of pro-Chinese content was administered in conjunction with the use of bribery, where Chinese agents were known to routinely pay prominent Taiwanese news organizations to draft articles praising China as a land of opportunity that will further increase Taiwan's standard of living were it to join the mainland.<sup>106</sup>

Part of China's ease in manipulating the narrative and flooding Taiwanese social media with favourable content is likely attributed to the island's democracy and the freedom that is afforded to its news media. According to their 2022 report, Freedom House has given Taiwan an overall global freedom score of 94 percent, the second highest of any Asian state except for Japan.<sup>107</sup> Dr. Chia-Lung Lin assesses that "China is openly leveraging and exploiting Taiwan's democratic and open system by the raising of multiple wedge issues simultaneously, with the intent of causing contradiction, competition, and conflict within Taiwanese society."<sup>108</sup> One of the methods employed is the sowing of doubt with regards to Washington's security guarantees

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<sup>104</sup> Timothy Walton, "Firing First Effectively: Lessons the Chinese Have Drawn from the Way the US Enters Conflict that Informs their Use Of The Three Warfares,"... 354.

<sup>105</sup> Nithin Coca, "Disinformation from China Floods Taiwan's Most Popular Messaging App," *Codastory*, 07 October 2020, <https://www.codastory.com/authoritarian-tech/taiwans-messaging-app/>

<sup>106</sup> Kerry Gershaneck, *Political Warfare: Strategies for Combating China's Plan to "Win Without Fighting,"*...130; Josh Rogin, "China's Interference in the 2018 Elections Succeeded—in Taiwan," *Washington Post*, 18 December 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2018/12/18/chinas-interference-elections-succeeded-taiwan/>

<sup>107</sup> Freedom House, "Global Freedom Scores," Last Accessed 01 May 2022, <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>

<sup>108</sup> Kerry Gershaneck, "Media Warfare: How Taiwan Can Win the Battle For the Cognitive Domain,"...67.

for Taiwan, which the latter sees as a bulwark against Chinese encroachment or military action. The US' disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan in the summer of 2021, however, was seized by Chinese media outlets and used extensively for propaganda purposes, highlighting Washington's lack of a reliability as a security partner. An article appearing in *The Global Times*, a daily tabloid funded by the Chinese Communist Party, encouraged the island's ruling Democratic Progressive Party to not put their trust in American security guarantees in the event of an open conflict with China.<sup>109</sup> The editor-in-chief of the newspaper, Hu Xijin, openly tweeted that Taipei might as well surrender right now as there is no hope of an American rescue if Beijing decides to attack.<sup>110</sup>

What is significant about Chinese media warfare in Taiwan is that it is for the most part coordinated through a central node within the PLA: Base 311. Headquartered in Fujian province in China and part of the PLA's Strategic Support Force, Base 311 (also known as Unit 61716) stands as the only PLA organization that has been publicly confirmed to focus on media/psychological warfare.<sup>111</sup> The organization consists of six subordinate units whose primary purpose is to influence Taiwanese public opinion in favour of Beijing through various communication means such as radio, television, and social media. What is interesting to note is that this military unit uses as cover the commercial persona of the China Huayi Broadcasting Corporation (CHBC); in fact, the commanding officer of Base 311 is also the CEO of CHBC.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Global Times, "Afghan Abandonment a Lesson for Taiwan's DPP: Global Times Editorial," *Global Times*, 16 August 2021, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202108/1231636.shtml>

<sup>110</sup> Blake Herzinger, "Taiwan isn't Afghanistan, Whatever Beijing Says," *Foreign Policy*, 23 August 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/08/23/taiwan-afghanistan-china-biden-us-reputation/>

<sup>111</sup> Edwin S. Cochran, "China's Three Warfares: People's Liberation Army Influence Operations," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology* Vol.20, Issue 03 (September 2020): 22, <https://commons.erau.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2385&context=ibpp>

<sup>112</sup> Mark Stokes and Russell Hsiao, *The People's Liberation Army General Political Department: Political Warfare with Chinese Characteristics...* 29.

Moreover, Ai Songru, a PLA psychological warfare specialist, has been confirmed as CHBC's director and general manager, further solidifying the link between the broadcasting company and the PLA's apparatus for political warfare.<sup>113</sup>

While publicly available information on Base 311 is scarce, much more is known about its public persona, the CHBC. Established in 1991, CHBC's focus is on Taiwan-related content, which it disseminated primarily through its "Voice of the Taiwan Strait" radio station. Describing itself as a promoter of Chinese culture and values, CHBC nonetheless routinely broadcasts Taiwan's pro-democracy government in a negative light, highlighting social grievances and political dysfunctions.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, CHBC is a key partner in organizing cross-strait exchange forums that promote ideas of reunification and the "rejuvenation" of the Chinese identity, one of the main strategies by which CHBC seeks to influence public opinion on the island. In the fall of 2016, for example, CHBC organized a college student exchange for students of elite Taiwanese universities under the theme of "committed to national unification and rejuvenation."<sup>115</sup> During the same period and taking advantage of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Sun Yat-sen, a unique Chinese statesman who is widely revered in both mainland China and Taiwan, China organized a commemoration bringing together youth delegates from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, and mainland China, to discuss future relations and to foster a "unique Chinese identity."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Elsa B. Kania, "The Role of PLA Base 311 in Political Warfare Against Taiwan (Part 3)," *Global Taiwan Brief* Vol.2, Issue 07 (February 2017), <https://globaltaiwan.org/2017/02/15-gtb-2-7/#ElsaKania021517>

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Elsa B. Kania, "The Role of PLA Base 311 in Political Warfare Against Taiwan (Part 3)," *Global Taiwan Brief* Vol.2, Issue 07 (February 2017), <https://globaltaiwan.org/2017/02/15-gtb-2-7/#ElsaKania021517>.

## Psychological Warfare

In line with Chinese writings on the purpose of psychological operations as discussed in Chapter 2, this component of the three warfares in Taiwan seeks to “reveal and exploit” divisions in the adversary’s domestic political establishment and create doubt in the mind of Taiwanese commanders and military personnel.<sup>117</sup> One of the ways that China has been utilizing psychological warfare against Taiwan is by capitalizing on cultural bias against military service, as a means to further degrade Taipei’s capabilities.<sup>118</sup> Taiwan’s military has gradually been converting itself into an all-volunteer force for the purposes of creating a more professional military. However, a more professional military also requires a steady stream of volunteers eager to fill its ranks. By negatively portraying a career in the armed forces through online news articles, China aims to restrict the flow of additional recruits and thereby further exacerbate the current situation.<sup>119</sup>

An additional message that Chinese authorities are keen to propagate across Taiwan to further cause doubts in the military’s competence is high profile espionage cases. Over the past several years, high-ranking Taiwanese officials have been caught spying for Beijing. In 2013, Taiwanese Rear Admiral Hsu Chung-hua, commander of the fleet in Penghu, has been suspected of espionage along with other lower-ranking officers.<sup>120</sup> Similarly, in another case described by

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<sup>117</sup> See Thomas J. Christensen, “Coercive Contradictions: Zhanyixue, PLA Doctrine, and Taiwan Scenarios,” in *China’s Revolution in Doctrinal Affairs: Emerging Trends in The Operational Art of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army*, ed. James Mulvenon and David Finkelstein (Alexandria: CAN Corporation, 2005.)

<sup>118</sup> Craig Murray and Kyle Churchman for The US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *Taiwan’s Declining Defense Spending Could Jeopardize Military Preparedness* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2013), 3,

[https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/Taiwan%E2%80%99s%20Declining%20Defense%20Spending%20Could%20Jeopardize%20Military%20Preparedness\\_Staff%20Research%20Backgrounder.pdf](https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/Taiwan%E2%80%99s%20Declining%20Defense%20Spending%20Could%20Jeopardize%20Military%20Preparedness_Staff%20Research%20Backgrounder.pdf)

<sup>119</sup> Jason R. Fritz, *China’s Cyber Warfare: The Evolution of Strategic Doctrine*...133.

<sup>120</sup> Timothy Walton, “Firing First Effectively: Lessons the Chinese Have Drawn from the Way the US Enters Conflict that Informs their Use of The Three Warfares,”... 359.

Taiwan's media as the highest level of espionage seen in the past 20 years, Colonel Lo Chi-Cheng of the Military Intelligence Bureau was caught spying for the Chinese intelligence services. Chi-Cheng was reportedly tasked with building Taiwan's human intelligence network in China.<sup>121</sup>

Another aspect of psychological warfare against Taiwan is the use of military assets, including conducting drills and military incursions into Taiwanese airspace, to further stress Taiwan's armed forces. For example, a year prior to the 2016 election and most likely for purposes of coercing the Taiwanese public into voting for the pro-Beijing candidate, the PLA staged an urban training exercise including tanks, artillery and infantry conducting an attack on a mockup of the Taiwanese Presidential Office.<sup>122</sup> When those manoeuvres failed to deter the election of a pro-Western government, China immediately conducted amphibious and live fire drills across the strait in order to curb the new government's ambitions for independence.<sup>123</sup>

Numerous air defence identification zone (ADIZ) incursions carried out by China in the last few years serve as a constant reminder to Taipei of China's military power next door. In October 2021, China dispatched nearly 200 military flights into the Taiwanese ADIZ, the most it has ever conducted in its history in that part of the world.<sup>124</sup> More recently, in the midst of the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine, China has once again violated Taiwan's ADIZ, which lead to

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<sup>121</sup> L.C. Russell Hsiao, "War Without Gunfire: China's Intelligence War With Taiwan," *China Brief* Vol.X, Issue 22 (November 2010):1, [https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/cb\\_010\\_239049.pdf?x12088](https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/cb_010_239049.pdf?x12088)

<sup>122</sup> Lo Tien-Pin and Jake Chung, "Chinese PLA Simulates Attack on Presidential Office," *Taipei Times*, 23 July 2015, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2015/07/23/2003623689>

<sup>123</sup> Simon Denyer, "China Responds to Taiwan Elections with Military Drills," *Washington Post*, 21 January 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/01/21/china-responds-to-taiwan-elections-with-military-drills-facebook-trolling/>

<sup>124</sup> John Feng, "China Smashes Record for Number of Military Flights Near Taiwan," *Newsweek*, 03 November 2021, <https://www.newsweek.com/china-smashes-record-number-military-flights-taiwan-1645343>



Taiwan scrambling its aircraft in self-defence.<sup>125</sup> Additionally, whereas past ADIZ incursions were mostly made up of surveillance aircraft, China has recently started to have its bomber force participate, leading to a further escalation of tensions. As a nod to the psychological effects that these incursions may be having on both Taiwanese fighter jet response and the public, Western news outlets like the New York Times assess that Beijing's strategy is to "normalize" these incursions so as to lead to long-term attrition in response, and perhaps a sense of complacency.<sup>126</sup>

China has also made use of its fleet of civilian vessels to further demonstrate its ability to leverage civilian platforms and to mobilize the public in the event of a conflict. Although Beijing has been known to use cargo ships to transport troops, materiel, and equipment, during a drill simulating an invasion of Taiwan, its latest tactic is the use of sand dredgers around Matsu Island (illustrated in Figure 4).<sup>127</sup> Located only nine kilometers from the Chinese coast and owned by Taiwan, the Matsu islands have been at the forefront of China-Taiwan tensions since the times of Mao and Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist forces. Beijing is now leveraging that proximity and employing creative new ways to exert pressure through the use of sand dredgers that are deployed into Taiwan-controlled waters and spend hours pumping out tons of sand from the ocean floor for construction projects in China.<sup>128</sup> The tactic is aimed at psychologically wearing down Taiwan's Coast Guard, which is now conducting round-the-clock patrols in an effort to

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<sup>125</sup> Dado Ruvic, "Taiwan Again Warns Chinese Aircraft in its Air Defence Zone," *Reuters*, 14 March 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/taiwan-jets-scramble-again-china-air-force-enters-air-defence-zone-2022-03-14/>

<sup>126</sup> Chris Buckley and Amy Qin, "In a Surge of Military Flights, China Tests and Warns Taiwan," *New York Times*, 03 October 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/03/world/asia/china-taiwan-flights-airspace.html>

<sup>127</sup> Minnie Chan, "China's Military Uses Civilian Cargo Ship for Transport in Taiwan Invasion Drill," *South China Morning Post*, 24 August 2021, [https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3146072/chinas-military-uses-civilian-cargo-ship-transport-taiwan?module=perpetual\\_scroll\\_0&pgtype=article&campaign=3146072](https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3146072/chinas-military-uses-civilian-cargo-ship-transport-taiwan?module=perpetual_scroll_0&pgtype=article&campaign=3146072)

<sup>128</sup> Yimou Lee, "China's Latest Weapon Against Taiwan: The Sand Dredger," *Reuters*, 05 February 2021, <https://graphics.reuters.com/TAIWAN-CHINA/SECURITY/jbyvmzerve/>

contain and repel the vessels.<sup>129</sup> According to local Matsu politician Li Wen, Beijing’s use of the sand dredgers can be seen as a “gray zone tactic, a nonmilitary form of exerting pressure, with the aim of harassment and intimidation.”<sup>130</sup>



**Figure 3 – Matsu Islands**

Source: Louise Watt, *Line in The Sand: Chinese Dredgers are Stealing Taiwan, Bit By Bit*

<sup>129</sup> Yimou Lee, “China’s Latest Weapon Against Taiwan: The Sand Dredger,” *Reuters*, 05 February 2021, <https://graphics.reuters.com/TAIWAN-CHINA/SECURITY/jbyvnrzerve/>

<sup>130</sup> Louise Watt, “Line in the Sand: Chinese Dredgers are Stealing Taiwan, Bit By Bit,” *NikkeiAsia*, 16 June 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/The-Big-Story/Line-in-the-sand-Chinese-dredgers-are-stealing-Taiwan-bit-by-bit>

Finally, China also adopts psychological warfare against Taiwan through the continued use of diplomatic isolation on the world stage. Following the electoral victory of President Tsai, Beijing immediately suspended any channels of official communication with Taipei. Countries such as Panama were offered privileged access to the Chinese COVID vaccine in exchange for further isolating Taiwan by refusing to recognize the island as a self-governing body that is independent from mainland China.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, since 2016 China has been able to successfully coerce seven of the 22 countries that had previously recognized Taiwan as an independent state to terminate their diplomatic relationships with Taipei.<sup>132</sup>

Along the same lines, China has also been known to employ psychological warfare, in the form of economic coercion, against any state that tries to formally recognize Taiwan. For example, Beijing has recently downgraded relations with Lithuania due to the opening of a Taiwanese representative office on Lithuanian soil. Consequently, all Lithuanian exports into China were blocked and consular services have been suspended.<sup>133</sup> Although Lithuanian exports into China represent less than 1 percent of its total exports, this demonstrates that China is willing to engage in political warfare against Western countries who adopt what it perceives to be an acceptable diplomatic position vis-à-vis Taipei.

## **Legal Warfare**

Although Chinese interpretations of legal warfare as defined in Chapter 2 aim to manipulate interpretations of specific laws for one's own benefit, the case in Taiwan

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<sup>131</sup> Charity S. Jacobs and Kathleen M. Carley, "Taiwan: China's Gray Zone Doctrine in Action," *Small Wars Journal*, 11 February 2022, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/taiwan-chinas-gray-zone-doctrine-action>

<sup>132</sup> Kharis Templeman, "How Taiwan Stands Up To China," *Journal of Democracy* Vol.31, Issue 03 (Jul 2020): 87, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2429461677?>

<sup>133</sup> Andy Bounds, "Lithuania Complains of Trade Sanctions by China After Taiwan Dispute," *Financial Times*, 03 December 2021, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2615711598?>

demonstrates that the concept can also be used to manufacture specific laws to reinforce one's position. Once again, Beijing is blaming Washington in setting a precedent. The US has always justified its arms sales to Taiwan as legal obligations stemming from the 1979 enactment of the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). With regards to providing military capabilities to Taipei, the TRA specifically notes that "the United States will make available to Taiwan such defence articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability."<sup>134</sup> According to Beijing's interpretation, however, Washington is simply manufacturing domestic laws as a legal cover to meddle in what China considers a purely domestic affair.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, the PLA legal guide suggests "intensifying and perfecting domestic legislation provides strong domestic legal support for the operation to crack down on the separatist forces."<sup>136</sup>

Consequently, China has taken measures to provide itself with a legal avenue to justify hostile action, up to and including the use of force, against Taiwan in case of its pursuit of independence. Shortly after the three warfares were made public in 2003, and as a response to the TRA, China adopted its Anti-Secession Law (ASL) aimed at threatening Taiwan with retaliatory measures up to and including the use of force if it decides to adopt a declaration of independence, going so far as labeling any attempt to do so fundamentally illegal.<sup>137</sup> The ASL, which took effect on March 14 2005, is an example of the use of legal warfare by utilizing one's own domestic legal system to attempt to overrule international law and international legal norms. Defined by Beijing as "a special kind of law", the ASL provides China with the necessary

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<sup>134</sup> House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, *Taiwan Relations Acts* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1979), Section 3(a), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/96th-congress/house-bill/2479>

<sup>135</sup> Dean Cheng, "Winning Without Fighting: Chinese Legal Warfare,"...4.

<sup>136</sup> Chris J. Kelshaw, "The Three Warfares: PLA Soft Power Aspirations Along the Cognitive Dimension,"...6.

<sup>137</sup> Dean Cheng, "Chinese Lessons From The Gulf War,"...187.

manoeuvre space to execute its decision-making with regards to Taiwan's independence; it stipulates that "if possibilities for a peaceful reunification should be completely exhausted, the state shall employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures to protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity."<sup>138</sup> The adoption of this law is consistent with a PLA analysis emphasizing the need to "promptly" leverage and supplement domestic laws if the existing norms are an impediment to PLA action.<sup>139</sup>

In contrast to the theory of jurisprudence which requires a law to be sufficiently detailed and specific in its meaning, the ASL is just over 700 words, broad, and deliberately vague.<sup>140</sup> Moreover, Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office confirmed that no supplementary documents would be written for the law.<sup>141</sup> It would seem that this decision, coupled with the vagueness of the law, was likely taken on purpose in order to allow Beijing the widest possible space for interpretation and so as to not limit its range of options as a response to Taiwan's actions. Ultimately, the ASL is a piece of legislation derived for the single purpose of indirectly controlling and threatening Taiwan's pro-democratic factions, all the while promoting reunification.<sup>142</sup>

Notwithstanding these efforts by China, it is important to note that Taiwan has made great strides in recognizing what Beijing is attempting to accomplish through the three warfares. Taiwan's foreign minister, Joseph Wu, stated in 2019 that "Taipei is the first line of defence in an ideological battle [...] We have felt the brunt of China's intensified campaign to subvert our

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<sup>138</sup> Tenth National People's Congress, "Anti-Secession Law – 2005, Article 8," in *Embassy Of The People's Republic of China in The United States* (Beijing: PRC, 2005), <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/ceus/eng/zt/999999999/t187406.htm>

<sup>139</sup> Dean Cheng, "Chinese Lessons From The Gulf War,"...187.

<sup>140</sup> You Ji, "China's Anti-Secession Law And the Risk of War in The Taiwan Strait," *Contemporary Security Policy* Vol. 27, Issue 02 (Nov 2006): 239.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> Cheng-Yi Lin, "The Rise of China and Taiwan's Response: The Anti-Secession Law as a Case Study," *Issues and Studies* Vol.4, Issue 01 (March 2007): 171.

democracy everyday [...] through disinformation [...] and seeking to interfere in our elections.”<sup>143</sup> According to Taiwan's Defence Ministry, there are over 300 Chinese agencies working on disinformation against Taiwan in order to create social panic, destabilize the economy, and significantly reduce morale and the will to resist reunification.<sup>144</sup> Taipei's 2006 National Security Report depicted “China's bloodless three warfares as Beijing's way of undercutting the stable operation of Taiwan's politics, economy, and society.”<sup>145</sup> In its 2009 Quadrennial Defence Review, Taiwan asserted that China may leverage the three warfares to seek “justification and legitimacy” in starting a conflict, influencing the national consciousness of its population while acquiring international support for their actions. Furthermore, Taiwan's 2009 National Defence Report concluded that Beijing has attempted to further strengthen its application of the three warfares by shifting its approach in Taiwan from one focused on kinetic capabilities to strengthening political work/political warfare.<sup>146</sup> Finally, implying the underlying use of the three warfares, Taiwan's latest National Defence Report asserted that Beijing's primary goal is to “seize Taiwan without a fight.”<sup>147</sup>

Considering Taiwan's full appreciation and knowledge of what China is attempting to achieve through the three warfares, one is bound to ask if it is possible to measure China's actual success in its application of this strategy? For starters, despite seeing some limited success in the

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<sup>143</sup> Marcus Kolga, “Taiwan Demonstrates How We Can Defend Canadian Democracy Against Information Warfare,” *Canadian Global Affairs Institute* (February 2021): 5, [https://www.cgai.ca/taiwan\\_demonstrates\\_how\\_we\\_can\\_defend\\_canadian\\_democracy\\_against\\_information\\_warfare](https://www.cgai.ca/taiwan_demonstrates_how_we_can_defend_canadian_democracy_against_information_warfare)

<sup>144</sup> Paul J. Bolt and Carl N. Brenner, “Information Warfare Across The Taiwan Strait,” *Journal Of Contemporary China* Vol.13, Issue 38 (2004): 138, <https://www-tandfonline-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1080/1067056032000151373>

<sup>145</sup> James R. Holmes, “Old – But Strong – Wine in New Bottles: China's Three Warfares,” in *China: The Three Warfares*, ed. Stefan Halper, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2013): 250, <https://cryptome.org/2014/06/prc-three-wars.pdf>.

<sup>146</sup> Sangkuk Lee, “China's Three Warfares: Origins, Applications, and Organizations,”... 199.

<sup>147</sup> Ministry of National Defence, *2021 National Defence Report* (Taipei: MND, 2021), 60, <https://www.ustaiwandefense.com/tdnswp/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Taiwan-National-Defense-Report-2021.pdf>

election of a pro-Chinese politician as the mayor of Taiwan's second largest city, the application of media warfare has not been successful in getting Beijing closer to its goal of reunification with Taiwan. The flooding of pro-Chinese social media posts denigrating President Tsai had little effect on the outcome of the presidential election. In fact, Tsai won a second presidential term with a record 8.2 million votes, well ahead of her pro-Beijing rival.<sup>148</sup>

China's success in attempting to sow distrust between Washington and Taipei with regards to the former's security guarantee is also marginal at best. In March 2022, the US sent a delegation to Taiwan to reiterate that Washington stands firmly behind its security commitments to the island.<sup>149</sup> Delegation lead Mike Mullen, who previously served as the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated that "collaboration between the United States and Taiwan is stronger and more expansive than it has ever been."<sup>150</sup> Moreover, a recent opinion poll conducted in August 2021 has indicated that for the first time in its history, a majority of the American public favour sending US forces to directly defend Taiwan if the latter was ever attacked by China.<sup>151</sup> The same can be said of CHBC's efforts at promoting the idea of reunification amongst the Taiwanese public. An October 2020 survey conducted by Taiwan's National Chengchi University found that the majority of Taiwanese do not want reunification with China, and would much prefer closer relations with Washington.<sup>152</sup> Hence, despite over 300 agencies dedicated to

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<sup>148</sup> John Sudworth, "Taiwan Election: Tsai Ing-wen Wins Second Presidential term," *BBC News*, 11 January 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-51077553>

<sup>149</sup> Yimou Lee and Sarah Wu, "US Stands Firm Behind Commitment To Taiwan, Delegation Says," *Reuters*, 01 March 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/us-delegation-taiwan-says-collaboration-stronger-more-expansive-than-ever-2022-03-02/>

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> Dina Smeltz and Craig Kafura, "For First Time, Half Of Americans Favour Defending Taiwan if China Invades," *The Chicago Council on Global Affairs* (August 2021): 1, <https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/research/public-opinion-survey/first-time-half-americans-favor-defending-taiwan-if-china-invades>.

<sup>152</sup> Timothy Rich and Andi Dahmer, "Taiwan Polling Opinion On Unification With China," *China Brief* Vol.20, Issue 18 (October 2020), <https://jamestown.org/program/taiwan-opinion-polling-on-unification-with-china/>

spreading disinformation and a consistent media warfare campaign to alter Taiwanese public opinion, Beijing does not seem to have achieved its objective.

Much of the same can be said of China's attempts at psychological warfare. Beijing's campaign to restrict recruitment into the Taiwanese armed forces by spreading disinformation with regards to a career in the military has not been successful. In 2021, Taiwanese Major-General Xia De-Yu confirmed that the military was able to enlist more soldiers than it anticipated the year before.<sup>153</sup> Moreover, a recent poll undertaken by Duke University and Taiwan's National Chengchi University conducted in the fall of 2020 indicates that the Taiwanese population are starting to re-evaluate their long-held negative views of their military. In this particular survey, citizens were asked if they believed the current four-month mandatory training regimen was of an appropriate length.<sup>154</sup> 75 percent responded that it was too short. In context, the survey was conducted during a period where President Tsai was actively gauging the possibility of increasing conscription from the current four months to at least one year. Hence, it seems that Beijing's attempts at dissuading the Taiwanese people from joining the ranks of their military is faltering, with more recruits willing to sign for seemingly longer periods of time. Even efforts to demoralize Taiwan's Coast Guard, which China has attempted to accomplish through the use of sand dredgers, appears to have limited impact. As a response to China's actions, Taiwan has relocated its latest Coast Guard vessel, the CGA 10073 patrol boat, closer to the Matsu islands.<sup>155</sup> The patrol boat is a maritime law enforcement vessel that has been deployed to the area to safeguard Taiwan's maritime border with China and boost the morale of

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<sup>153</sup> Taiwan News, "Taiwan Planning to Recruit 18,000 Soldiers in 2021," *Taiwan News*, 09 March 2021, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4146137>

<sup>154</sup> Austin Horng-En Wang et al, "What Do People in Taiwan Think About Their Military?" *The Diplomat*, 21 October 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/10/what-do-people-in-taiwan-think-about-their-military/>

<sup>155</sup> Kelvin Chen, "Taiwan Stations New Coast Guard Vessel in Kinmen," *Taiwan news*, 13 August 2021, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4269405>



Coast Guard personnel. In addition to this move, as recently as 08 April 2022 Taipei has provided its Coast Guard with two additional offshore patrol vessels, with the government planning to manufacture an additional 141 ships from now until 2027.<sup>156</sup>

With regards to the diplomatic saber-rattling between China and Lithuania, Brussels has come out in support of the latter.<sup>157</sup> In January 2022, The European Union's high representative, Josep Borrell, stated that the bloc has expressed "clear solidarity" with Lithuania in its row with China. Moreover, Taiwan has invested a significant amount of funds into Lithuania to help the country's economy in its confrontation with Beijing. In addition to pledging a \$1 billion credit fund aimed at helping Lithuanian businesses, Taiwan will invest \$200 million in technological emerging sectors of Vilnius such as microchip manufacturing, semiconductors and laser technology, all areas in which the EU is desperately trying to evolve.<sup>158</sup> Considering that according to the United Nations COMTRADE database on international trade, Lithuanian exports to China amounted to approximately \$358 million in 2020, the impact of China's actions seem marginal at best.<sup>159</sup> Hence, this situation can actually be deemed as a loss for China in the information war.

Finally, with regards to China's Anti-Secession Law, its purpose has always been to deter Taiwan separatism through fear that Beijing could deploy its military forces to reunify the island by force. In fact, Article 8 of the Law confirms this threat by stating that:

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<sup>156</sup> Matthew Strong, "Taiwan Coast Guard Receives Two Offshore Patrol Vessels," *Taiwan news*, 08 April 2022, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4500794>

<sup>157</sup> Christopher Pitchers, "Brussels Backs Lithuania in Row With China Over Taiwan," *Euronews*, 14 January 2022, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/01/14/brussels-backs-lithuania-in-row-with-china-over-taiwan>

<sup>158</sup> Euronews, "Taiwan Pledges To Invest 178 Million Euros in Lithuania Amid Chinese Pressure," *Euronews*, 06 January 2022, <https://www.euronews.com/2022/01/06/taiwan-pledges-to-invest-178-million-in-lithuania-amid-chinese-pressure>

<sup>159</sup> United Nations International Trade Statistics Database, *Lithuanian Exports 2020*, <https://comtrade.un.org/labs/data-explorer/>

*In the event that the "Taiwan independence" secessionist forces should act under any name or by any means to cause the fact of Taiwan's secession from China, or that major incidents entailing Taiwan's secession from China should occur, or that possibilities for a peaceful reunification should be completely exhausted, the state shall employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures to protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>160</sup>*

However, continued polling of Taiwan's population is indicating a steady rise in separatist fervour. A poll conducted in 2020, 15 years following the passage of the ASL, indicated that 54 percent of respondents supported formal independence from China, the highest support ever recorded in Taiwan's history.<sup>161</sup> In March 2022, those figures rose even higher when a survey found that approximately 90 percent of the population supported formal independence from China and approved of closer cooperation with other democracies, with 75 percent considering China as a hostile government.<sup>162</sup> It is clear that China's attempts at both coercing and influencing Taiwan's separatist position through the use of the three warfares has been unsuccessful. If anything, the responses of both the Taiwanese government and its population to China's strategy seems to indicate a more rigorous desire to remain independent and hostile to Chinese influences.

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<sup>160</sup>Tenth National People's Congress, "Anti-Secession Law – 2005, Article 8," in *Embassy Of The People's Republic of China in The United States* (Beijing: PRC, 2005), <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/ceus/eng/zt/999999999/t187406.htm>

<sup>161</sup> Huang Tzu-ti, "Poll Shows Highest Ever Support For Taiwan Independence," *Taiwan News*, 22 June 2020, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3951560>

<sup>162</sup> Business Standard, "Polls Confirms Popular Rejection of China's Unification Attempts in Taiwan," *Business Standard*, Last Updated 26 March 2022, [https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/poll-confirms-popular-rejection-of-china-s-unification-attempts-in-taiwan-122032600382\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/poll-confirms-popular-rejection-of-china-s-unification-attempts-in-taiwan-122032600382_1.html)

## CHAPTER 4 – THE ARCTIC

The application of the three warfares is not limited to Beijing's near abroad. China is also leveraging this strategy in one of the most contentious and strategically important regions in the world, the Arctic. Once an arena of potential confrontation between the East and West during the Cold War, the circumpolar region has seen a resurgence on the international stage driven primarily by the advent of climate change. With the melting of sea ice, estimates suggest upwards of two trillion cubic feet of natural gas and almost 100 billion barrels of oil underneath the Arctic's surface, coupled with the opening of a North Sea passage that would significantly reduce shipping times for maritime commerce.<sup>163</sup> China has attempted to employ the three warfares to leverage these realities in order to strengthen its position in the Arctic.

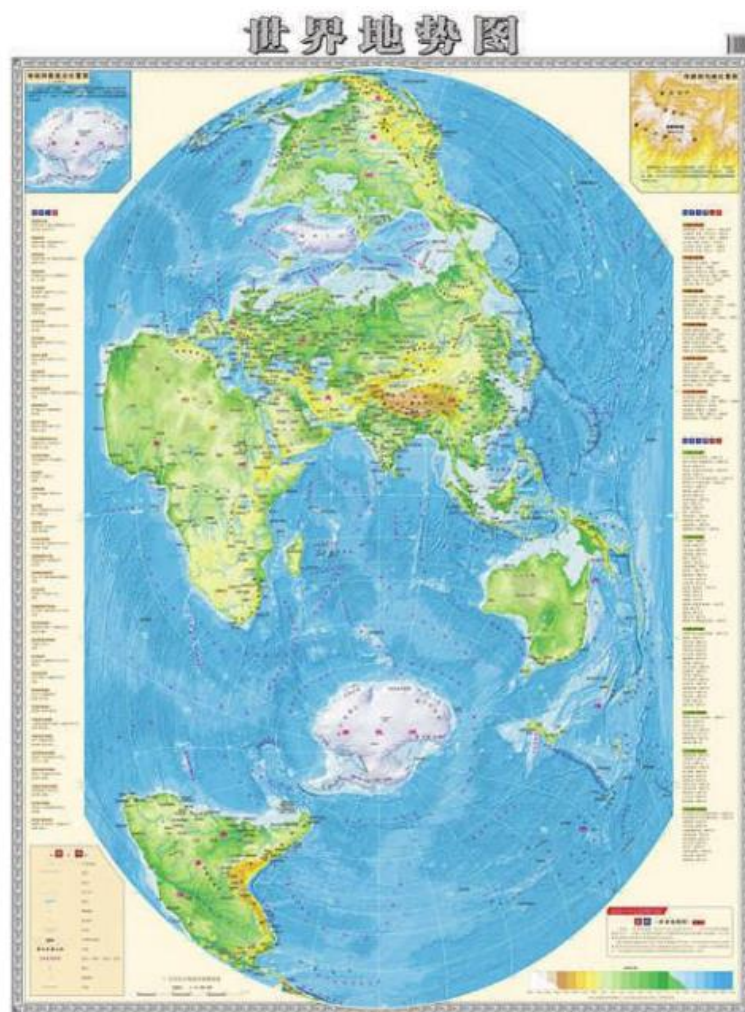
As illustrated in Figure 5, China's new vertical world map depicts the emerging geopolitics from Beijing's perspective. Adopted by the PLA as a military map in 2006 and officially recognized as one of China's world maps in 2014, it is a visual representation of China's self-perception in the current geopolitical environment: assertive, central, cooperative when it aligns with its interests and bellicose when required.<sup>164</sup> Unlike traditional Western world maps that place Europe at the centre and the Arctic at the edge of the world, China's vertical map depicts Beijing in the centre, dominating the Asia-Pacific landmass, illustrating the Arctic as a

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<sup>163</sup> Debalina Ghoshal, "China's Submarine Fleet in the Arctic," *European Security And Defence* Vol. 2 (2020): 16, [https://euro-sd.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/ESD\\_02\\_2020\\_WEB.pdf](https://euro-sd.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/ESD_02_2020_WEB.pdf); See Department of Northern Affairs, *Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 2019) <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1560523306861/156052330587>; United Nations Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change, *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report* (Geneva: UN, 2015), 70, [https://archive.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR\\_AR5\\_FINAL\\_full\\_wcover.pdf](https://archive.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full_wcover.pdf)

<sup>164</sup> Anne-Marie Brady, *China As A Rising Polar Power: What It Means For Canada* (n.p.: Macdonald-Laurier Institute, December 2019), 9, [https://macdonaldlaurier.ca/mli-files/pdf/ChinaArctic\\_FWeb.pdf](https://macdonaldlaurier.ca/mli-files/pdf/ChinaArctic_FWeb.pdf)

central ocean ringed by North America and Europe. The map reflects Beijing's perception as a polar power, despite having no territory in either polar region.<sup>165</sup>



**Figure 4 – Chinese Vertical World Map**

Source: Brady, *China As A Rising Polar Power: What It Means For Canada*, 8.

<sup>165</sup> Frank Jacobs, "Is this the World Map of the Future?" *Big Think*, 12 August 2019, <https://bigthink.com/strange-maps/future-world-map/>

A review of the scholarly literature available on Chinese intentions in the Arctic has unveiled two diametrically opposed positions with regards to the purpose behind Beijing's actions in the region. On the one hand, scholars such as Anne-Marie Brady view China's increasing involvement in the Arctic through the lens of security and as a threat to Western interests in the region.<sup>166</sup> Their primary arguments are based on Chinese activities in the region, which includes scientific expeditions and research facilities, as being "dual-use" – leveraged for both civilian and military applications.<sup>167</sup> Brady warns against China's supposed encroaching desire to establish a longer-term military presence in the region. Others scholars, such as Andrea Beck, find these perspectives alarmist and too narrow in their interpretation of Chinese ambitions in the Arctic. Beck argues that China's main purpose in seeking access to the Arctic is strictly related to commerce and economics, as opposed to any military objective.<sup>168</sup> Hence, China is therefore a victim of its "great power" status and therefore, as an adversary of Washington, is presumed to possess underlying strategic military ambitions with regards to the region. Regardless of the arguments brought forth by both sides concerning China's underlying purpose in seeking access to the Arctic, the scholarly consensus remains that Beijing seeks to bolster its influence in the region.

In order to understand China's reasoning in deploying tools of political warfare so far away from its shores, we need to appreciate the value that having access to the Arctic brings to

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<sup>166</sup> See Anne-Marie Brady, *China As A Polar Great Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), Chapter 6, <https://www-cambridge-org.cfc.idm.oclc.org/core/books/china-as-a-polar-great-power/22493FFC041E6739DAED329CCB71F688>; Shiloh Rainwater, "Race To The North: China's Arctic Strategy and its Implications," *Naval War College Review* Vol.66, Issue 02 (Spring 2013), <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1345597463?>

<sup>167</sup> Rush Doshi et al, "Northern Expedition: China's Arctic Activities and Ambitions," *Brookings Institute Report* (April 2021), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/northern-expedition-chinas-arctic-activities-and-ambitions/>

<sup>168</sup> Andrea Beck, "China's Strategy in the Arctic: A Case of Lawfare?" *The Polar Journal* Vol.4, Issue 02 (November 2014): 308, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/2154896X.2014.954886>

Beijing. Since undertaking major economic reforms in the late 1970s under Deng Xiaoping, China has sustained consistent economic growth over the past four decades, becoming the world's current second largest economy. However, sustaining such economic momentum and ambition poses a significant strategic dilemma for Beijing: its economy depends overwhelmingly on long-term access to critical resources, particularly oil and gas.<sup>169</sup> Hence, any potential disruption to the flow of resources could impede Chinese ambitions to economically outpace Washington. As such, the protection of the supply of natural resources such as petroleum have been identified by the CCP as a key component of China's national economic security since 2003.<sup>170</sup>

Beijing currently faces the challenge in which the majority of oil imports are transferred across foreign-controlled sea lines of communications, thereby rendering this flow vulnerable to sabotage and interdiction. The Straits of Malacca, for example, through which roughly 85 percent of Chinese oil imports transit, are a strategic lifeline potentially vulnerable to actions by littoral states such as Malaysia and Singapore, who themselves are facing disputes with China regarding territorial claims in the South China Sea.<sup>171</sup> Moreover, the threat of piracy in East Africa has significantly increased insurance premiums for ships generating further risk and volatility for China. With resource acquisition, access/transit rights, and secure sea lines of communication as primary foreign policy objectives, Beijing has expressed deep-seated anxieties with regards to the security of its energy imports, coupled with potential strategies to alleviate

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<sup>169</sup> US Energy Information Administration, *China Surpassed the US As The World's Largest Crude Oil Importer in 2017*, <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=37821>; Observatory of Economic Complexity, "Natural Gas, Liquefied," Last Accessed 02 May 2022, <https://oec.world/en/profile/hs/natural-gas-liquefied>. China is the world's largest importer of oil and the second largest for natural gas, as per data from 2020.

<sup>170</sup> Hongyi Harry Lai, "China's Oil Diplomacy: Is it a Global Security Threat?" *Third World Quarterly* Vol.28, Issue 03 (2007): 522, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20454944>

<sup>171</sup> Ian Storey, "China's Malacca Dilemma," *China Brief* Vol. 6, Issue 08 (12 April 2006), <https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-malacca-dilemma/>

such vulnerabilities.<sup>172</sup> The Arctic therefore presents China with the means to continue fueling and sustaining economic growth, primarily through its abundant reservoirs of natural resources.

Being a non-Arctic state, however, presents Beijing with a disadvantage in pursuing its objectives when compared to those “traditional” Arctic littoral countries who make up the Arctic Council.<sup>173</sup> China has not been traditionally recognized as having had direct interest in the region, nor does it possess territory there. As such, China likely seeks to employ methods designed to avoid raising suspicion, obscure or even diversify intent, and exploit the seams in the adversary’s awareness and understanding in order to achieve its aims.<sup>174</sup>

### **Media Warfare**

Contrary to the situation in Taiwan, China has no real historical narrative to rely on when it comes to its interests in the Arctic. Anne-Marie Brady has claimed that China has a credibility gap in the region with regards to its involvement, thereby the need to actively shape the narrative.<sup>175</sup> One of the ways that Beijing attempts to bridge this gap, both for the international community and its domestic audience, is through media censorship on what can and cannot be said with regards to its activities in the Arctic. The CCP divides strategic communications into two broad categories: those efforts targeted at a foreign audience and those targeted at the domestic audience.<sup>176</sup> This same dichotomy is used extensively regarding polar affairs. While

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<sup>172</sup> Shiloh Rainwater, “Race To The North: China’s Arctic Strategy And Its Implications,”...65.

<sup>173</sup> These countries include Canada, the US, Russia, Denmark, and Norway.

<sup>174</sup> Lillian Alessa et al, “Asymmetric Competition In The Arctic,” *Journal Of Indo Pacific Affairs* Vol.04, Issue 09 (Winter 2021): 1, <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Dec/12/2002907694/-1/-1/1/JIPA%20WINTER%202021.PDF/JIPA%20WINTER%202021.PDF>

<sup>175</sup> Anne-Marie Brady, *China As A Rising Polar Power: What It Means For Canada...*35.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.* 37.

seeking recognition from the international community as a legitimate Arctic player, China is also having to project strength and status expected of a great power to its own population.<sup>177</sup>

Arctic documents aimed at foreign audiences avoid any mention of strong interest in exploiting polar resources, whereas documents aimed at a domestic audience, this desire for exploitation is highlighted as one of the main reasons behind China's involvement in the region.<sup>178</sup> As an example, in January 2018 China published its Arctic strategy. The release of the strategy was a significant endeavour considering that it was the first time that Beijing had ever issued an official foreign policy strategy for a region outside its immediate geographical neighborhood.<sup>179</sup> The document is geared primarily towards a Western audience, where China emphasizes a peaceful and cooperative approach based primarily on benevolent search and rescue activities geared for scientific advancements and climate research.<sup>180</sup> In contrast, material in Mandarin describing China's ambitions in the Arctic specifically emphasizes the importance of resource extraction, securing sea lines of communication in the Northern Sea Route and the opportunity for China to take part in Arctic governance as Beijing's strategy for the region.<sup>181</sup> In so doing, China deploys its media/public opinion warfare to both appease and target the intended audience: projecting an image of a benevolent partner, while simultaneously acknowledging ambitious objectives in line with the CCP's overall strategy of economic growth.

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<sup>177</sup> Anne-Marie Brady, *China As A Rising Polar Power: What It Means For Canada...* 37.

<sup>178</sup> David Curtis Wright, "The Dragon and Great Power Rivalry at the Top of The World: China's Hawkish, Revisionist Voices Within Mainstream Discourses on Arctic Affairs," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute Policy Paper*, (September 2018): 3, [https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/cdfai/pages/4051/attachments/original/1538001979/The\\_Dragon\\_and\\_Great\\_Power\\_Rivalry\\_at\\_the\\_Top\\_of\\_the\\_World.pdf?1538001979](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/cdfai/pages/4051/attachments/original/1538001979/The_Dragon_and_Great_Power_Rivalry_at_the_Top_of_the_World.pdf?1538001979)

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.



Beijing has employed public opinion warfare in the Arctic since at least 2008. Propelled by the success of the Olympics that year, China began to capitalize on its emerging and evolving international reputation by leveraging various media platforms to highlight its achievements in the Arctic for both domestic and international consumption.<sup>182</sup> For the latter, China turned to tested and proven methods employed in media warfare campaigns previously used against Taiwan: leveraging the allure of finance to spread the desired narrative. The Central Committee Foreign Propaganda Group, an agency under the CCP Politburo and responsible for nationwide propaganda distribution, has leveraged multiple Western media outlets, including prominent ones such as the New York Times and the Washington Post, to portray China's economic ambitions in the Arctic as legitimate.<sup>183</sup> With the release of the Arctic Policy in 2018, the key themes of "legitimacy" have been further reinforced by the digital engagement of the so-called "Chinese troll army" on social media.<sup>184</sup> These platforms are also leveraged to circulate articles by Chinese academics and officials outlining the legitimacy of Beijing's interests in the Arctic until it gradually begins to be accepted as the normal state of affairs."<sup>185</sup>

### **Psychological Warfare**

As was discussed in Chapter 2, the Chinese view psychological warfare as a tool to hamper an adversary's decision-making capability using a variety of methods, including economic coercion and bribery. In the case of the Arctic, China's primary tool for psychological warfare is its Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) into Arctic member states. For the last decade,

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<sup>182</sup> Stefan Halper, *China: The Three Warfares...* 191.

<sup>183</sup> Hope Carr, "Arctic Sovereignty and Information Warfare," (Joint Command and Staff Programme Solo Flight Paper, Canadian Forces College, 2018): 10, <https://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/259/290/402/305/carr.pdf>

<sup>184</sup> Ryan Fedasiuk, "China's Internet Trolls Go Global," *Council On Foreign Relations*, 07 June 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/chinas-internet-trolls-go-global>.

<sup>185</sup> Hope Carr, "Arctic Sovereignty and Information Warfare,"...11.

China has been capitalizing on the economic misfortunes of a state to flood it with capital in order to secure influence and infrastructure.<sup>186</sup> Arctic members have also demonstrated a willingness to cooperate with China in exchange for economic support. Iceland, for example, demonstrated itself willing to cooperate with Beijing following the collapse of the country's three largest banks, engendering a financial crisis with severe repercussions that would last several years.<sup>187</sup> Moreover, both China and Iceland signed a Free Trade Agreement in 2013, the first of its kind between Beijing and a European state.<sup>188</sup> In 2017, Greenland's Prime Minister had made plans to have Beijing provide the capital to fund the construction of three commercial airports in the country; the project never materialized due to Denmark and the US influencing Greenland to change course.<sup>189</sup> Moreover, the influx of Chinese capital into these countries may be perceived as further compromising their decision-making ability with regards to Chinese interests in the Arctic. For example, in April 2013 Icelandic President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson openly expressed his support for China to be given greater presence in the Arctic given its economic contribution to his nation.<sup>190</sup>

## Legal Warfare

An additional reason for Beijing's growing interest in the Arctic is the inherent fear of exclusion from the region and its resources at the expense of the circumpolar states. Back in 2008, the "Arctic Five"—Canada, Russia, the United States, Denmark, and Norway—signed the

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<sup>186</sup> As demonstrated by Beijing's purchase of the Greek Port of Piraeus.

<sup>187</sup> Anh Nguyen, "Case Study: Iceland's Banking Crisis," *Seven Pillars Institute for Global Finance and Ethics*, 13 June 2017, <https://sevenpillarsinstitute.org/case-study-icelands-banking-crisis/>.

<sup>188</sup> Marc Lanteigne, "China's Emerging Arctic Strategies: Economics and Institutions," *The Centre For Arctic Policy Studies*, (2014): 13, [https://nupi.brag.eunit.no/nupi-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/285164/ChinasEmergingArcticStrategiesPDF\\_FIX2.pdf?sequence=3](https://nupi.brag.eunit.no/nupi-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/285164/ChinasEmergingArcticStrategiesPDF_FIX2.pdf?sequence=3)

<sup>189</sup> Drew Hinshaw and Jeremy Page, "How the Pentagon Countered China's Designs on Greenland," *Wall Street Journal*, 10 February 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-the-pentagon-countered-chinas-designs-on-greenland-11549812296>. The US has a large military base in Thule.

<sup>190</sup> Suzanne Goldberg, 'China Should Have a Say in the Future of Arctic: Iceland President,' *The Guardian*, 16 April 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/apr/16/china-future-arctic-iceland>

Ilulissat Declaration, whose purpose was to ensure a peaceful resolution of territorial sovereignty disputes in the region. The issue arose from the document's narrow definition of Arctic matters as those related solely to the littoral states, thereby excluding all others.<sup>191</sup> As such, to secure its access to the Arctic, Beijing began to engage in legal warfare primarily through its Arctic Policy so as to undermine the legal framework and solidify its access to the region. Despite being located over 900 miles from the Arctic Circle, Beijing chose to frame the narrative in its favour by labeling itself a "near-Arctic" state.<sup>192</sup> Beijing's justification, as stated in the second chapter of its Arctic Policy, is that China is "one of the continental states that are closest to the Arctic Circle."<sup>193</sup> This proclamation was greeted in Europe with derision and disbelief; the German news magazine *Der Spiegel* complained that Germany's northernmost point at Sylt, a German island, is located north of China's northernmost point, and yet Berlin has never thought of calling itself the capital of an Arctic state.<sup>194</sup> Nonetheless, the label of being a "near-Arctic" state has provided Beijing the platform to argue for greater participation in the region's affairs.

Another indication of attempts to manipulate the law is China's declaration that the laws governing Arctic matters are the creation of western powers, and therefore inherently unjust.<sup>195</sup> Beijing interprets the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), specifically Articles 56 and 87, as granting it rights and privileges with respect to Arctic access, scientific

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<sup>191</sup> Shiloh Rainwater, "Race To The North: China's Arctic Strategy And Its Implications,"...71.

<sup>192</sup> See Barry Scott Zellen, "China and The Near-Arctic: An Opportunity Lost Over 150 Years Ago," *Georgetown Journal Of International Affairs*, (05 September 2019), <https://gija.georgetown.edu/2019/09/05/china-and-the-near-arctic/>. There is no legal definition in international law of what constitutes a "near-Arctic state." US rejects this claim.

<sup>193</sup> Timo Koivurova et al, "China's Arctic Policy," in *Chinese Policy And Presence In The Arctic*, ed. Timo Koivurova and Sanna Kopra (Boston: Brill Nijhoff, 2020), 29.

<sup>194</sup> David Curtis Wright, "The Dragon and Great Power Rivalry at the Top of the World: China's Hawkish, Revisionist Voices Within Mainstream Discourses On Arctic Affairs,"...5.

<sup>195</sup> Stefan Halper, *China: The Three Warfares...* 191.

research, and navigation.<sup>196</sup> For Chinese officials, UNCLOS provides them the legal basis for freedom of navigation through the Arctic Ocean's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the right to explore its resources.<sup>197</sup> However, most of the hydrocarbon resources in the Arctic are located within the 200 nautical miles (nm) of a nation's EEZ, thereby granting littoral countries exclusive jurisdiction in exploring them.<sup>198</sup> Furthermore, according to one interpretation of UNCLOS, littoral countries also possess jurisdiction over seabed resources that are beyond the 200nm limit as long as the country can prove that the geology of the seabed is a natural prolongation of its continental shelf.<sup>199</sup> Hence, Beijing's position of laying a claim can be difficult to accept, with scholars such as Elizabeth Wishnick stating that Beijing simply employs UNCLOS to "internationalize" the Arctic, and by doing so attempts to legitimize its own position.<sup>200</sup> Without offering to any concrete substantiation, China is interpreting the entirety of the UNCLOS as it relates to the Arctic and its resources as "common heritage of all humankind" and not the exclusive domain of the Arctic Five.<sup>201</sup>

China is also striving to reform the institutions governing Arctic relations to be more in line with this legal interpretation. For example, China's national news magazine *Beijing Review* has accused every treaty and organization constituting the Arctic legal regime — which includes UNCLOS, the International Maritime Organization, and the Arctic Council—as corrupt and

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<sup>196</sup> United Nations, "United Nations Convention On The Law Of The Sea – 1982, Article 56 & 87," in *United Nations* (Geneva: UN, 1982), [https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos\\_e.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf)

<sup>197</sup> Jingchao Peng and Njord Wegge, "China and the law of the sea: implications for Arctic governance." *The Polar Journal* Vol.4, Issue 02 (2014): 298, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/2154896X.2014.954887>

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*; Eeva Turunen, "Resources in The Arctic 2019," *Nordregio*, January 2019, <https://nordregio.org/maps/resources-in-the-arctic-2019/>

<sup>199</sup> Michael Byers, *International Law and the Arctic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 254; See also United Nations, "United Nations Convention On The Law Of The Sea – 1982, Article 76," in *United Nations* (Geneva: UN, 1982).

<sup>200</sup> Elizabeth Wishnick, *China's Interests and Goals in the Arctic: Implications for the United States* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2017): 28,52, <https://apps-dtic-mil.cfc.idm.oclc.org/sti/pdfs/AD1029172.pdf>

<sup>201</sup> Shiloh Rainwater, "Race To The North: China's Arctic Strategy And Its Implications,"...13.

inherently hostile to China's position.<sup>202</sup> Moreover, considering that China views the law and governing institutions as tools that can be manipulated for the party's benefit as was discussed earlier in the paper, Beijing's shifting discourse on Arctic governance is a case-in-point. Back in 2012 when China's application to accredited observer status was still being considered, Beijing touted the Arctic Council as "the most influential international institution for developing Arctic governance and cooperation."<sup>203</sup> With the release of its Arctic Policy six years later, China has sought to downplay the Council's role and influence in Arctic governance, likely because this position suited their arguments about its allegedly corrupt governance. The emphasis this time around reinforced the narrative that the region is managed by legal frameworks that are beyond those of the Arctic Council, including the UN Charter, UNCLOS, treaties on the climate and the environment, and other relevant rules of the International Maritime Organization.<sup>204</sup> As such, according to Beijing's interpretation, these frameworks not only confirm the rights of non-Arctic states in the region, but also minimize the Council's position as a governing body.<sup>205</sup>

Similar to the situation that China is facing with the three warfares in Taiwan, increased effort in their application does not necessarily translate to success. The fact that China has adopted a communication strategy consisting of differing messages for two distinct audiences clearly illustrates that Beijing appreciates the sensitivity that those claims can have on a Western audience, coupled with China's desire not to incite suspicion vis-à-vis its objectives in the Arctic.

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<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Linda Jakobson and Jingchao Peng, "China's Arctic Aspirations," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, Policy Paper 34, (November 2012): 11, <https://arcticportal.org/images/PDFs/SIPRIIPP34.pdf>

<sup>204</sup> Bryan J.R Millard and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Trojan Dragons? Normalizing China's Presence in The Arctic," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, Policy Paper, (June 2021): 11, [https://www.cgai.ca/trojan\\_dragons\\_normalizing\\_chinas\\_presence\\_in\\_the\\_arctic#\\_ftn40](https://www.cgai.ca/trojan_dragons_normalizing_chinas_presence_in_the_arctic#_ftn40)

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

Notwithstanding these realities, the very fact that Western scholarship is aware of this scheme and is writing about it already seems to demonstrate the reduced effectiveness of such a strategy.

Moreover, Beijing's attempt to leverage various media platforms to legitimize its greater involvement in the region does not seem to produce the desired result; in fact, the opposite seems to be true. Despite billions of dollars and a multitude of social media campaigns enacted to promote its image as a dependable Arctic partner, China is not favourably viewed in Greenland. In 2021, for the first time in the country's history, Greenland's population was put to a public opinion survey on foreign relations and security. The results indicated that almost 50 percent of the population wanted less cooperation with China in the Arctic, while 67 percent held negative views of Beijing's FDI in the country.<sup>206</sup> Furthermore, Iceland has rejected additional Chinese foreign investment in the guise of the Belt and Road Initiative.<sup>207</sup> Hence, it seems that China has economically leveraged a great deal of investment for what turns out to be a very uncertain political payoff.

Finally, although China claims that the three warfares rest on a subtle and sophisticated application, Beijing's strategy of labeling itself as a near-Arctic state is more in line with a blunt and obvious instrument. China's efforts in acquiring a greater say in Arctic affairs has been met with both skepticism and outright concern from Arctic states.<sup>208</sup> In 2019, Finland's ambassador for Arctic affairs, Aleksi Härkönen, mentioned in *The New York Times* that China is after global influence in the Arctic; in addition to former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo publicly

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<sup>206</sup> Martin Breum, "A First Ever Foreign Policy Opinion Poll in Greenland Shows Support for More Cooperation With US, Denmark," *Arctic Today*, Last Modified 22 February 2021, <https://www.arctictoday.com/a-first-ever-foreign-policy-opinion-poll-in-greenland-shows-support-for-more-cooperation-with-us-denmark/>

<sup>207</sup> Alexandra Alper, "Pence Says he Hopes for Orderly Brexit Amid Showdown," *Reuters*, 04 September 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-iceland-idUSKCN1VP20B>

<sup>208</sup> Heiner Kubny, "Will Russia Put China's Arctic Ambitions on Hold?" *The Polar Journal* Vol.17, Issue 06 (June 2021), <https://polarjournal.ch/en/2021/06/17/will-russia-put-chinas-arctic-ambitions-on-hold/>

rejecting Beijing's near-Arctic state status.<sup>209</sup> Even Russia has expressed its concern. According to an interview conducted with Alexander Gabuev of the Carnegie Moscow Centre, Arctic Council members, including Russia, have worked together to render China "voiceless" and to limit its involvement in the group as that of an observer, primarily out of fear of Beijing acquiring an oversized influence and subverting the Council.<sup>210</sup> It seems that China's current strategy in the Arctic has raised further suspicion of its intentions in the region amongst the Arctic states, failed to incline Nordic governments to increase mutual cooperation, and essentially left China with no further say or influence in the Arctic than it did back in 2013 when it became an observer. Therefore, Beijing's application of the three warfares in the Arctic can be assessed as ineffective in achieving its strategic objectives.

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<sup>209</sup> Rachael McCulloch, "What is China Doing in The Arctic?" *NATO Association Of Canada*, 23 September 2020, <https://natoassociation.ca/what-is-china-doing-in-the-arctic/>

<sup>210</sup> "Arctic Council Members Want China to Remain an Observer in the Group: Expert," CNBC Video, 2:06, Posted By "CNBC," 19 May 2021, <https://www.cnbc.com/video/2021/05/19/arctic-council-members-want-china-to-remain-an-observer-expert.html>. Russia's position was made known prior to the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. It will be interesting to see if Moscow will amend its position given current events. Arctic Council observers are invited at meetings and "observe", while being able to make relevant contributions. Only Arctic members are granted decision-making ability at all levels of the Council. See Arctic Council, *Role of Arctic Observers*, Last Accessed 02 May 2022, <https://www.arctic-council.org/about/observers/>

## CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION

Major James G. Pangelinan, in his study of what characterizes the Chinese way of war, concludes that Chinese martial philosophy places great importance on the value of shaping operations defined as “the arrangement of the conditions of the war, campaign, or battlefield in one’s favour before initiating combat.”<sup>211</sup> The purpose of this research project was to describe and evaluate the application of one of China’s shaping operations strategy, the three warfares, as it is being applied in Taiwan and the Arctic. The paper outlined that the strategy, although tracing its roots to ancient Chinese lessons learned during the Warring States period, has been adapted to the realities of the modern informational and technological era. These realities, according to Beijing, have been illustrated throughout a number of post-Cold War conflicts in which Washington demonstrated its prowess in shaping public opinion, demoralizing the adversary, and leveraging selected legal frameworks to justify its actions.

This project has also discussed, through various use of historical examples, that despite the Pentagon’s assertion that the West has not previously considered the three warfares strategy and that it is somehow novel, the West has indeed leveraged it in the past, albeit with little success.<sup>212</sup> Moreover, despite military assessment reports indicating that the three warfares have the potential to fundamentally alter Washington’s competitive position in the South China Sea, this paper has demonstrated that their application against Taiwan and the Arctic has left a number of doubts on their effectiveness.<sup>213</sup> The Taiwanese independence movement continues to grow under President Tsai and has recently received an additional boost of support from

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<sup>211</sup> James G. Pangelinan, “From Red Cliffs To Chosin: The Chinese Way Of War,” (monograph, School Of Advanced Military Studies, 2010), 8, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA523450.pdf>

<sup>212</sup> Stefan Halper, *China: The Three Warfares...* 19.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid*, 11.



Washington in the midst of Russia's invasion of Ukraine; All of this in the context of Beijing applying its three warfares strategy against Taiwan since its very inception in 2003. More of the same has been seen in the Arctic where despite China investing significant funds in Nordic countries and creating for itself a narrative that justifies its involvement in the region, China has not come any closer to achieving its stated strategic objective of greater access for economic purposes.

Considering the political context that countries such as Canada are working on drafting a specific strategy to deal with China, there are two primary lessons that can be drawn from this analysis.<sup>214</sup> The first one, to paraphrase Sun Tzu, is that knowing is half the battle. As was discussed in previous chapters, both the Taiwanese and Nordic governments are aware of China's three warfares and how Beijing has been applying the strategy against their respective nations. As such, they could take counter-measures and further fortify their states against the intended effects. A parallel could be drawn to the realities of Russian disinformation, especially in the current context of the war in Ukraine, and how Western governments have taken stock of the situation and implemented a number of strategies to limit its effects.<sup>215</sup> According to the US Department of Defense's own assessment to Congress, the PLA will continue to emphasize the development of the three warfares as its primary non-kinetic shaping strategy.<sup>216</sup> Hence,

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<sup>214</sup> Rachel Gilmore, "Canada Working on New China Strategy, Joly Says as PM Calls Out Beijing's Coercive Diplomacy," *Global News*, 09 January 2022, <https://globalnews.ca/news/8496485/china-strategy-canada-joly-trudeau-beijing-coercive-diplomacy/>

<sup>215</sup> See Elizabeth Dwoskin, "China is Russia's Most Powerful Weapon For Information Warfare," *Washington Post*, 08 April 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/04/08/russia-china-disinformation/>; Will Duffield, "Russia Shows the Limits of Propaganda," *CATO Institute* (blog), 08 March 2022, <https://www.cato.org/blog/russia-shows-limits-propaganda>. Russian news outlets and social media content have been restricted in the West since the start of the Ukrainian invasion.

<sup>216</sup> US Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving The People's Republic of China...X*.

countries must be prepared to face this strategy as they decide on how to properly engage with Beijing.

The second lesson that can be drawn from this project is that democracies are not easily controlled or manipulated from the outside. Beijing's application of the three warfares in Taiwan and the Arctic was based on a crudely transactional model but did not seem to take into account factors such as populism, democratic institutions, free and independent media, and the diversity of civil society as a whole. Although these factors render a democratic model of government "messy" and "unpredictable", in the words of Edward Lucas from the Centre for European Policy Analysis (CEPA), it is that "messiness" that constitutes a democracy's enduring strength.<sup>217</sup> In attempting to purchase influence and manipulate public opinion, China may have been mirroring its own expectations and understandings of its authoritarianism unto its adversaries, a system in which the notion of control and order is paramount.<sup>218</sup> Hence, it could be argued that China is demonstrating a lack of flexibility and adaptability to the environment in which it operates.

Does this signify that China's three warfares is fundamentally a flawed strategy? Not necessarily. One of the limitations of this project is that it only sought to cover the three warfares' application in two distinct regions. As such, it would be a mistake to posit that the strategy's ineffectiveness in Taiwan and the Arctic can be transferred to other regions where China exudes an interest. If anything, this paper has sought to highlight some of the limitations

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<sup>217</sup> Edward Lucas, "The Weakness of Democracy's Strength," *Centre For European Policy Analysis*, 05 February 2019, <https://cepa.org/the-weakness-of-democracys-strength/>

<sup>218</sup> For more information on the notion of "control" in an authoritarian regime, see Milan W. Svolik, *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

of the three warfares as they are applied to strategic problem sets. The three warfares is not a strategy that is very widely written about in Western circles, either in academia or the military. Hence, although this project attempted to provide additional context and application, there are still numerous gaps in the literature with regards to China's use of the three warfares. Further research for consideration could include ways in which liberal democratic governments, especially Canada, should respond to the challenge of the three warfares. Although Taiwan has provided a good roadmap for tackling this issue, more research would be welcomed since Canada's spy agency has recently warned that Beijing's efforts to distort information and influence the news media has become normalized, much more sophisticated, and "insidious."<sup>219</sup> In additional area that could benefit from further research is how Beijing intends to use the three warfares during sustained combat operations in conjunction with its conventional forces, and how this strategy could evolve under the PLA's approach to future warfare, a concept that is labeled as "informationized warfare".<sup>220</sup> Finally, considering Moscow's *rapprochement* with Beijing in the context of the former's invasion of Ukraine, research on how China may leverage the three warfares in its relationship with Russia could bring value, specifically as China now seems to be the dominant partner in that relationship.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Catharine Tunney, "Spy Agency Warned Trudeau China's Tactics Becoming more Sophisticated, Insidious," *CBC News*, 07 December 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/csis-trudeau-china-media-1.6270750>

<sup>220</sup> For further information on informationized warfare, see "Cyber Dragon: Inside China's Information Warfare and Cyber Operations," YouTube video, 1:08:44, posted by "The Heritage Foundation," 20 March 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9OIqfEKnsrM&t=467s>

<sup>221</sup> Michael Shuman, "China's Russia Risk," *The Atlantic*, 09 March 2022, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2022/03/xi-putin-friendship-russia-ukraine/626973/>

In conclusion, US Major General Perry Smith once said that understanding warfare was the most important responsibility of those who have taken up the call to defend a nation from future enemies. It is my hope that this paper was able to provide additional comprehension and understanding with regards to the three warfares strategy; a strategy that despite its shortcomings, will likely continue to remain an integral component of the PLA's fighting capability.

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